Edited by:
Frederik Smit
Kees van der Wolf
Peter Sleegers

A Bridge to the Future

Collaboration between Parents, Schools and Communities

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Preface

Children learn at home, in school and in the community. Collaboration between parents, schools and communities is necessary to the optimize of pupils' developmental opportunities, the enhancement of pupils' educational careers and the improvement of teachers' task performance.

ERNAPE (European Research Network About Parents in Education) is an association of research networks in the area of education, in particular parents in education. In 1993 the association was established with the aim to share research results and stimulate research at all levels.

A first conference 'Education is Partnership' was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1996.
The second roundtable conference 'Building bridges between home and school' was in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 1999.
On 22, 23 and 24 November 2001 the third conference was organized at the Ichthus College in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. During this conference the current state of affairs, models, strategies, legislation, experiences and experiments concerning collaboration between home-school-communities were discussed.

The participants came from many countries in Europe including Hungarian, the Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, Bulgaria and also Cyprus. From outside Europe, the United States of America, Australia, Canada and Malaysia were represented. The participants were not only researchers but also represented ministries of education, parent organisations, teacher organisations and schools.

One researcher from the ITS, in collaboration with specialists on parent participation from the University of Nijmegen and the SCO-Kohnstamm Institute have brought together in this volume the recent scientific and social developments in relation to the collaboration between families, schools and communities.

We hope that this volume stimulates to build a well-designed bridge that connect and unite all partners at home, in school and in the communities to increase pupils' success.

Nijmegen/Amsterdam, November 2001

prof. dr. Hans Mastop
director ITS

prof. dr. Hetty Dekkers
director NUOVO

dr. Anton Nijssen
director SCO-Kohnstamm Institute

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Introduction: A Bridge to the Future

This volume is a collection of 35 essays, grouped into three sections, on the theme of parents, school and community.
The first part contains parents' orientation and reflections on the collaboration between home, school (Don Davies), conceptual partnerships of home-school partnerships (Rollande Deslandes), family education and implications for partnership with schools (Raquel-Amaya Martínez González) and family-school liaisons (Loizos Symeou). Loes van Tilborg and Wander van Es give their vision on the relation between government, school and parents. Kateøina Emmerová and Milada Rabušicová explore questions about the relationships between parents and school in the Czech Republic. Eddie Denessen, Geert Driessen, Frederik Smit and Peter Sleegers focus on the culture differences in education. Jacques Braster presents findings of a study of the parental need for pluralistic education. Paul Jungbluth gives an description of issues relating to minority parents in the Netherlands. Raili Kärkkäïnen reports about the interaction process between children and adults. Miek Laemers and Frans Brekelmans give an overview of the position of parents in primary and secondary education in the Netherlands. To finish this first section Juliette Vermaas presents an evaluation of the legal functions of the complaints regulation in primary and secondary education in the Netherlands.

The second part is devoted to the school perspective on collaboration between families, school and community. Cees Klaassen and Frederik Smit describe the changing responsibilities between home and school and the consequences for the pedagogical professionality of teachers. Andrea Laczik gives an example of home-school relationships in a Russian school. Jacqueline McGilp presents an analysis of lifelong learning and parental contribution. Maria Mendel focuses in her study on the orientations of American and Polish teachers about school-family community partnerships. The study of Sean Neill concerns the position of parents in the school system. The research of Kees van der Wolf and Tanja van Beukering focuses on working with challenging parents within the framework of inclusive education. Pirjo Nuutinen reports what Finnish teachers think about their power position in relation to parents. The study of Sharifah Md. Nor and Jennifer Wee Beng Neo concerns involving parents in children's education in Malaysia.

The third section reports on a number of investigations related tot specific aspects of school-family-community relations. Birte Ravn presents her ideas about teacher training on parents in education. The study of Diana B. Hiatt-Michael concerns preparing teachers to work with parents. Helen Phtiaka reports on parental perspectives on special education in Cyprus. Elzbieta Bielecka shows the results of a study into children and youth from socially deprived families in Poland. Willy Lahaye and his colleagues (Nimal and Couvreur) focus on young people's representations of school and family relationships in Belgium. Stefano Castelli and Luca Vanin explore questions about school-family relations in Italy. Sally Wade presents a survey of parents of children with disabilities. Martha Allexsaht-Snider and Stacy Schwartz describe the family, school, and community intersections in teacher education and professional development. Miriam David gives an overview of changes in policies and practices in relation to families, gender and education. Laura De Clara presents findings of their study into the role of the media in education. The research of

Freda Rockliffe reports a study on mathematics in a Canadian elementary school. Metin Alkan focuses on racism in education in the Netherlands. Frederik Smit, Geert Driessen and Peter Sleegers describe their study into the relationships between parents of ethnic minority children, the schools and supporting institutions in the local community. The study of Anne Bert Dijkstra & Lex Herweijer concerns the relationship between motives for choice and denomination in primary education in a system of choice.

Finally Iskra Maksimovic & Alvard Harutynyan describe strong linkages among involved parents to improve the educational systems and societies of emerging democraties.

The contributions to this volume were presented at the European Research Network About Parents and Education (ERNAPE) held in Rotterdam (the Netherlands) on 22, 23 and 24 November 2001.

Frederik Smit
Kees van der Wolf
Peter Sleegers

Section 1

Parents’ perspectives on the collaboration between home and school

Can schools help to build a bridge to a new democratic future?

Don Davies

Many gurus, journalists, and ordinary people these days are saying that nothing will be the same in the world after September 11. Many are talking - often very vaguely and grandly-about a New World Order - influenced by the inevitability of Globalism, the pervasive power of electronic communication, the impact of mass popular culture, and our long-term struggle to reduce terrorism.

But, we must ask what will be the shape and spirit and substance of this changed world and the New Order. Predicting what will be is a very uncertain proposition, so I find it more interesting and more important as an educator to ask *what should be* the shape and spirit and substance of our future? But, this question is even more difficult and certain to produce disagreement and controversy. But, that is the way it should be.

This brings me to the question I have been wrestling with ever since the truly horrible tragedies in my country on September 11 and aftermath of those events, which are still unfolding.

Here is the question and the frame for my brief comments here this morning:

Can the school have a significant impact on the shape and spirit and substance of our world in this new century?
Can the school make a real difference? You can imagine that I am talking about schools in America only, or schools in the Western world, or schools everywhere.

I have been wrestling in an often confused and sometimes rambling state of mind with this question and its more specific and personal follow-on:

Can the school make a real difference? Can teachers, parents, and communities help the bridge that is needed to reach a more democratic future, a new world social order?
Here, I must put in my own and inevitably controversial personal views about the direction of change. Because without some clarity and some agreement about direction, the new world order might be that envisioned by Hitler, or one of the early Popes who spurred the Crusades, or by Osama Ben Laden or other radical Islamic fundamentalists, or by American politicians who want a world that looks exactly like our prosperous, supposedly all-powerful, capitalist, materialist, Superpower America.

So, my question then becomes: Can the schools contribute significantly to a new changed social order:

- In which we share material resources more equitably.
- In which we make more widely available decent housing, health care and opportunities for work, leisure, and education.
- In which we have greatly reduced violence of all kinds (including, of course, terrorism).

- In which we have learned how to reduce and control hatred, hostility, suspicion, and fear between and among people across boundaries of nations, regions, continents, races and ethnic groups, religions, genders.
- In which we have achieved a good, workable balance between individual freedom and, and responsibilities and between local and collective, social interests.
- In which social justice is more widely practiced for all.
- In which we have learned better to enhance to protect our natural environment and our cultural and esthetic treasures.

That long list *of 'in which's'* point to most of the main elements of my own vision of a more *democratic* society, of what I mean by a new social order. Now, what can and should school do to help to build a bridge to that future?

First and most importantly They should not and cannot do much that matters - except in collaboration with their students, the families of those students, and the community institutions, agencies and residents.

Among the most helpful ideas I have found in the past few weeks is in a book written seventy years ago by George S. Counts, then a well-known educational philosopher at the Teachers College of Columbia University, where I studied (but not quite 70 years ago). His 1932 book (now largely forgotten) was entitled *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* It created a huge stir in the educational world.
I just have re-read it and find much of it very relevant in 2001.

Counts pointed out that Americans have a sublime and naïve faith in education. Many are convinced that education is the one unfailing remedy for every ill to which mankind is subject. Some Americans speak glibly about the reconstruction of the society through education. He rejected this idea that the schools can do everything but at the same time asserted that they can and should do a lot toward the kind of democratic social order that he believed in which is quite similar to the vision that I have sketched here.

Counts thought that the unique power that school possessed was its ability to formulate and articulate the ideal of a democratic society, to communicate that ideal to students, and to encourage them to use that ideal as a standard for judging themselves and their society.

I agree with this point, and I want to build on it, and to suggest briefly some work and action for schools, families, and communities together in order for the school to help build a new more democratic order. I will briefly suggest four arenas for possible work and action:

1. What children are taught: content and experience.
2. The school as a model of democratic practice.
3. School and community exchange.
4. Leadership by teachers unions and parent associations in support of a progressive social agenda.

Please understand that I have neither the time nor the capacity to offer specific details, prescriptions, or advice about how to do it. I ask you to be patient with general ideas and directions.

First, what children are taught: content and experience
Problem: Most countries now use textbooks and curriculum which either subtly or blatantly to promote only national pride and values and an ethnocentric Establishment-authorized view of history. Examples: In the US few schools teach children much about our treatment of the Native Americans, which was sometimes out and out genocide. Most countries push patriotism, but seldom salute the world globe as well as their own flag. Few of our schools give a balanced view of the struggle of labor unions in years past

and their mistreatment by corporate America and the government. Many schools stress only the academic development of children neglecting their physical and emotional development.

Clearly, we need to offer children more multi-cultural, multi-national content and experience and we need to help children develop the confidence and skill to analyze both past and present events critically.

At the same time we need to attend both the intellectual and the physical and emotional needs of learners. We know that children that are hungry, frightened, ill-clad, or emotionally unstable can not be good learners.
In my opinion children in a new democratic order need to understand and respect their own roots, culture, language, and community traditions as a needed foundation for understanding and respecting the roots, cultures, and traditions of others.

I recognize that what I am suggesting is politically impossible in a democratic society, and can't even be approached in a limited way without the support and collaboration of families and the decision-makers in communities, state, and national capitals. A supportive political climate is needed, and as Counts said, schools have only limited capacity to affect the broader political and economic system.

Second: the school as a model of democratic practice
Problem: In the US and many other Western countries there is a huge gap in academic achievement and success between children of poor, working class and immigrant families and children of the dominant middle class and more affluent families.

In the US and many others many schools operate with tight, top-down management, which allows for little if any participation in decision-making by students or parents. In these schools is honored in books, ceremonies, and lectures, but not actually practiced.

Democratic practice requires more than talk. It requires policies and practices that promote academic and social success for all children, regardless of their background. The new democratic social order will be impossible if societies continue to practice educational triage, consigning a substantial percentage of young people to second or third class roles in life.

Closing this gap would be a big contribution to building the new social order, but everyone here will agree, I believe, that this cannot be achieved without real and continuing support and collaboration of parents and the key institutions and agencies in the community.

A school can also work in other ways toward becoming a model, an example, of democratic ideas in practices. These ideas are obvious to us, including.

Respect for others, including those that are different.
Opportunities for all in the school community - students, teachers, parents, administrators, school staff to have influence on the decisions that affect them.
Workable mechanisms for decision-making allowing parents a real voice in the important decisions of the school and school system - decisions about budgets, curriculum, and personnel.
Mechanisms for resolving conflict and differences through negotiation and compromise.
Recognition of the different needs, talents, and learning style of students.

And, of course, many of you will agree that students (and parents and teachers) learn more about democracy from being a part of it in a school than they will by reading textbooks or hearing lectures about democracy.

A few schools in the countries represented here are making some progress on this front, as we are hearing at this conference.

Third, school-community exchange

Problem: In the US the traditional isolation of schools from other community institutions and agencies continues in many places. Too many schools in the US see connections with the community as a process of getting money, equipment, and political support rather than a genuine exchange.

My experience over many years has shown me that the most productive relationship between a school and its community is based on mutual self-interest theory and requires the school to expand the contribution that it can make to the community just as it seeks to increase the resources that the community can offer the school. Schools have facilities and equipment, the expertise of teachers and administrators, jobs for local residents, and the energy and time of their students.

Community Services programs for young people are a good way to help both the young people and the community and an interesting way to help shape a democratic future by reinforcing the belief of young people that every individual can make a difference.

(An example: Providence College in Rhode Island is using foundation grant money to create a network of 250 public high schools to advance civic engagement, beginning a student led civic audit to assess what their schools are doing well to provide opportunities for them to participate in the public life of their communities and what areas could be improved.)

In addition, the school I am envisioning will be a genuine community school offering needed courses, training, meeting places and help to parents and other adults in the community in collaboration with other community institutions. Such a school is lively part of the life of the community.

Fourth: the role of teachers unions and parent associations in support of a progressive social agenda

Problem: Teacher unions in the US, which quite properly and by definition attend to the economic interests of their members, often drag their feet and oppose school reform efforts, including any serious involvement of parents and the community.
Our unions have tended (with some important exceptions) to be cautious about promoting progressive social agenda. And, in at least a third of our states they are politically very weak.

In the US parent associations have seen their role as primarily to raise money and support the school leaderships agenda on educational matters. They have seldom been out in front on progressive social issues and have often been very conservative and cautious.

George Counts in *Dare the School Build a New Social Order* strongly advocates a more aggressive and progressive role for organized teachers.
He makes this statement, which educators today will see as radical: ‘The power that teachers exercise in schools can be no greater than they wield in society. In order to be effective they must throw off the slave psychology that has dominated the mind of the pedagogue since ancient Greece.In their own lives they must bridge the gap between school and society and play some part in the fashioning of those great common purposes, which should bind the two together. ‘ (p. 29 Dare the School Build a New Social Order (new edition) Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale Illinois, 1978).
Counts makes an interesting point here, but it is politically unrealistic in most American communities, unless the political and social leadership of teachers is strongly supported and protected by their unions.

Counts urged organized teachers to spark the labor movement to lead efforts to democratize American life, focusing on improving the conditions of socially marginal people and what he called the 'lower classes'.

It would certainly be a useful contribution to building the kind of social order I have been discussing here if teachers' organizations in the US would take the lead on a progressive social agenda, including issues of immigration, mistreatment of gay people, affordable housing, and economic policies that damage the working poor.

Unfortunately, Counts ignores the role of parents and parent associations. Robert Putnam, a Harvard political scientist, has written a widely discussed book, *Bowling Alone, The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Putnam's studies demonstrate that one important element of a civil society and stronger communities is networks of civic associations. By civic associations he means organizations such as parent groups, local choruses and orchestras, sports clubs, neighborhood.
Putnam says that various forms of parent involvement - which we now often called partnership - can be helpful in democratic societies seeking to sustain and advance democratic principles and to build a more civil and prosperous and productive community. Independent, community based parent and citizen organizations working on school issues can also help to enliven local democracy. These organizations and parent associations linked to the schools can be seen as having a potential positive impact on the school's contribution to building a new democratic social order, if they deliberately and aggressively seek to do this.

Conclusion
A final point - one that is both scary and offers hope. Samuel Huntington the Harvard Political Scientist wrote a book in 1996: The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order.' He predicted that 21st Century global conflict will occur not between nation states such as the United States, Russia, and China, but between civilizations defined by shared values, culture and religion. None will clash more violently than the predominantly Christian nations of the West and Muslim nations that stretch from Africa to Indonesia. That is scary, given the events of the last few weeks.

But, the hope lies, Huntington says, in making progress toward a more peaceful, universal civilization - which can emerge gradually through the exploration and expansion of our communalities.

Helping young people discover these commonalities while not losing the special, positive things that make individuals and groups different is a task within the reach of educators and parents everywhere. And, this task, which calls for collaboration and partnership. Discovering commonalities is form of building the bridge to the future, isn't it?

As I see it just now, the challenge in these troubled and troubling times for my country and yours is to move toward a culture that values diversity as well as traditional identity, that puts social justice ahead of profit, reconciliation ahead of revenge, and common humanity ahead of tribal interests. It is a culture that can face and not deny its shortcomings and seek to remedy them.
To go back to the question I began with: Parents and teachers and communities *can* help to build the bridge to a more democratic future, to that new social order I envision.
But, we must not burden them with super-inflated expectations nor underestimate the barriers and the political and social realities.

What I have wanted to say today is that we should do what we can in the spirit of school-family-community partnership, and in that way, we CAN make a difference.

A vision of home-school partnership: three complementary conceptual frameworks

Rollande Deslandes

This presentation aims to examine the complementary nature of three conceptual frameworks of home-school partnership. Epstein's (1987) overlapping spheres of influence model illustrates a global and holistic vision of partnership. The model of parental involvement designed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) adds to understanding by focusing on parental sense of efficacy and parental role construction. The enabling and empowerment model (Bouchard, 1998; Dunst et al., 1992) focuses on the influence of attitudes and behaviors within parent-teacher interactions in a reciprocal partnership. A vision of collaborative partnership appears to prevail in Quebec schools at the moment. Despite some reported difficulties, however, reciprocal partnership represents a promising avenue.

The school-family relation is currently a topic of interest among parents, teachers, policymakers and all those involved in childhood education, as is made clear in a report of the OECD (1997) and a Notice of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (1998). It is the subject of a number of researches at the provincial, national and international levels as well (e.g., Bouchard, 1998; Epstein, 1996, 2001; OECD, 1997; Pourtois & Desmit, 1997; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). A study of both theory and practice highlights a trend towards parental involvement, while the prevailing political discourse aims to develop collaboration - partnership, even - between schools and families. Amendments to Quebec's Education Act in December 1997, for example, affirmed that parents were partners in school management by virtue of their participation in the school council. Those in favor of the partnership approach cite the results of several researches demonstrating the benefits of collaboration, notably, an improvement in school grades, behaviors and attitudes (Epstein, 1996). Not everyone agrees with this approach, however, especially those who view partnership as a means of maintaining teachers' professional control by considering parental support as an option (Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). Still others deplore the predominance of a vision of school-family collaboration dictated solely by the school and its teachers, insisting that a one-way partnership is not viable (Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). Lareau (1996), for her part, categorically rejects a concept of partnership based on equal status, since she believes teachers should have greater power than parents. Cochran and Dean (1991) call for compensatory programs of parent education as well as interventions based on enabling and empowerment (Dunst et al., 1992). For Bouchard (1998), however, these two last principles meet the very definition of partnership as '.the actualization of the resources and competencies of each' (p. 23) (free translation). In a similar vein, the OECD (1997) describes partnership as á.process, since it involves learning to work together and valuing each partner's positive contribution to the relationship' (p. 58) (free translation).

During training sessions for teachers and human service practitioners, we often encountered questions such as the following: 'What do you do when the parents you want to see never come to

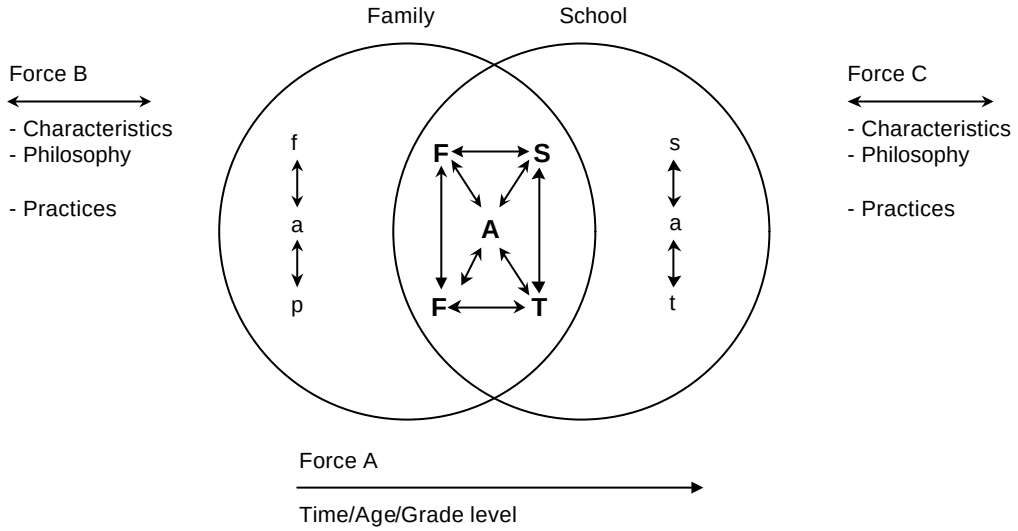
the school?' or 'What can be done to attract parents who are difficult to reach?' This led us to reflect upon the notion of partnership that now prevails in schools in Quebec and upon how this model of partnership corresponds to the one advocated by various educational organizations. The present communication will examine the complementary nature of the three conceptual frameworks related to home-school partnerships: the model of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1987), the model of parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995, 1997) and the family enabling and empowerment model (Bouchard, 1998; Dunst et al., 1992). Of the three, the model of parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995, 1997) will be given particular attention because of its concern with the problem of difficult-to-reach families. Finally, we will take a look at the type of partnership that now exists in several schools in Quebec, more specifically at the secondary level.

Our view of genuine partnership is one based on mutual trust, common goals and two-way communication. To collaborate is to participate in the accomplishment of a task or the assumption of a responsibility. Partnership is therefore a collaborative relationship between two parties, and parental involvement is a means of establishing it. Certain authors use the term 'reciprocal' partnership to describe a mutual sharing of tasks or responsibilities, and the term 'collaborative' or 'associative' partnership to describe a situation where a task or responsibility is assumed at the request of the school and its teachers (Bouchard, 1998; Boutin & Le Cren, 1998; Dunst et al., 1992; Epstein, 1992).

The Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model

Inspired by the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) and designed from a social and organizational perspective (Litwak & Meyer, 1974; Seeley, 1981, cited in Epstein, 1987, 1992, 1996), the overlapping spheres of influence model emphasizes the cooperation and complementarity of schools and families, and encourages communication and collaboration between the two institutions (Epstein, 1987, 1996). This model consists of spheres representing the family and the school that may be pushed together or pulled apart by three forces: time (Force A), the characteristics, philosophies and practices of the family (Force B) and those of the school (Force C). These forces may or may not help create occasions for shared activities between the school and the family. We note, for example, that the spheres overlap to a greater extent during a student's preschool and primary school years (Force A). Likewise, when parents participate in the education of their child (Force B), the zone of interaction between the two spheres increases. The same scenario is repeated when the teacher's activities encourage parental involvement in schooling (Force C). Interaction between the two spheres is at a maximum when the school and the family function as genuine partners within an overall program that includes a number of shared activities. The model emphasizes reciprocity among teachers, families and students and recognizes that students are active agents in school-family relations. A teacher may, for example, solicit parental involvement by asking children to question members of their families about the kinds of work they do. The model assumes that an exchange of skills, abilities and interests between parents and teachers that is based upon mutual respect and a sharing of common goals will benefit children's learning and development (Epstein, 1996, 2001).

Figure 1 - Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model



Key: *Intrainstitutional* interactions (lower case)
Interinstitutional interactions (upper case)
f/F: Family s/S: School a/A: Adolescent p/P: Parent t/T: Teacher

(Epstein, 1987, 1992, 1996, 2001)

School-family partnership activities have been grouped into a typology consisting of six categories: (a) parents' basic obligations towards their children (type 1), such as supervision, guidance and the provision of needed materials; (b) the school's basic obligations towards children and their families (type 2), such as communications to parents about school programs and students' progress; (c) parental involvement at school (type 3), shown by the volunteering of parents in the classroom and their attendance at special events; (d) parental involvement in home learning (type 4), including help with school work, discussions about school, encouragement, compliments, etc.; (e) parental involvement in decision-making (school, school commission, etc.) (type 5), which refers, among other things, to parents' involvement in the school council, and (f) collaboration with the community (type 6),that is, exchanges among parents within the same community (Epstein, 1992, 1996).

Parents who are less involved in the schooling of their children are usually from non-traditional families with lower levels of education (Force B) (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1992; Deslandes, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999). These parents generally tend to help a child more in primary than secondary school, and to give more attention to one who is doing well or beginning to have problems than one who has been experiencing longstanding difficulties (Force A) (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Of the variables examined, the activities implemented by the school, that is, school-family partnership programs, have proved to be the best predictors of parental involvement (Force C) (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). In other words, parents become more involved in their children's education at home and at school when they

perceive that their collaboration is actively encouraged by the teachers and the school. Taking as a guide the overlapping spheres of influence model with its typology of school-family partnership activities, we recently did a study comparing the levels of involvement of parents of students in the regular secondary III program (N=525) with those of parents of students in special education (N=112) (Deslandes, Royer, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999). The latter group was composed of students with learning difficulties or behavioral problems who were at least two years behind in school. As reported in the educational literature, the families of problem students had lower levels of education and tended to be non-traditional (single-parent, blended or other). The results showed significant differences in the level of involvement of the two groups of parents, particularly with respect to activities categorized as type 1 (e.g., parental supervision), type 3 (e.g., involvement in the school activities of the student), and type 4 (e.g., home involvement such as help with homework, discussions and encouragement). Since these are the very types of parental involvement that have a positive effect on school performance according to students' perceptions, how can these differences be explained? For an answer, we must look beyond Epstein's model to the model of parental involvement designed by Hoover-Demsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), which seems to offer additional, or at least more detailed, ways of examining the issue.

The model of parental involvement

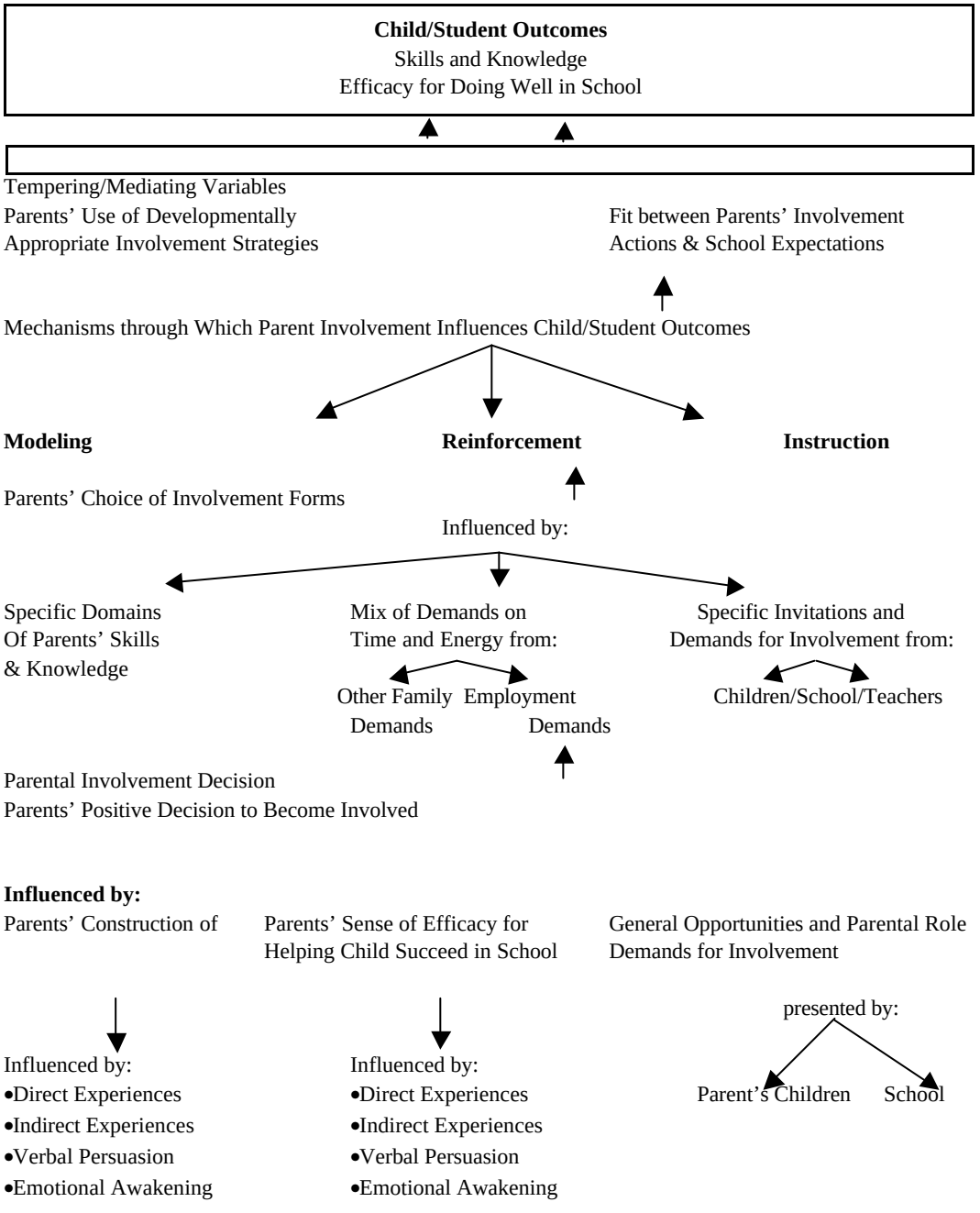
Shaped in part by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1976, 1986) and based upon the results of psychological and sociological studies, the model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) examines the process of parental involvement beginning with parents' decision to become involved (table 2). The model, which is read from bottom to top, reasons that parents decide to participate when they understand that collaboration is part of their role as parents, when they believe they can positively influence their child's education and when they perceive that the child and the school wish them to be involved. The model suggests that once parents make the decision to participate, they choose specific activities shaped by their perception of their own skills and abilities, other demands on their time and energy and specific invitations to involvement from children, teachers and schools. The model also holds that parental involvement influences children's educational outcomes by means of modeling, reinforcement and instruction, three mechanisms which are, in turn, mediated by the developmental appropriateness of parents' strategies and the fit between parents' actions and the expectations of the school. The goal of parental involvement here is its influence on the child's educational outcomes, particularly his or her knowledge, skills and sense of efficacy for succeeding in school. For the purposes of this study, our discussion will be limited to the first level of this model.

At the first level, the model suggests that parents' decision to become involved in their child's education varies according to 1) their construction of the parental role, 2) their sense of efficacy for helping their child succeed, and 3) the invitations, demands and opportunities for involvement presented by the child and the school.

1 - Construction of the Parental Role

Parental role construction is of primary importance because it determines what type of activities parents will consider necessary when interacting with their child. It is influenced by their understanding of the parental role and their views on child development, child-rearing and home-support roles. Accordingly, parents are unlikely to become involved if they believe teaching should be left solely to teachers (Ritter, Mont-Reynaud & Dornbusch, 1993), or if they are convinced an adolescent is primarily responsible for his or her own education (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Role theory applied to parents' choices regarding their child's education (Forsyth, 1990) holds that the groups to which

Figure 2 - The Model of parental involvement



parents belong – family, school, workplace – have expectations about appropriate behaviors, including those concerning parental involvement. If the school expects little parental involvement, for example, parents will be less inclined to participate (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Parents' Beliefs About Child Development and Child-Rearing

Relationships have been established between parental beliefs, values, goals and knowledge on one hand, and a variety of parental behaviors pertinent to the development of the child on the other (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). For example, parents who believe that children need affection and external structure and that the goal of education is to develop skills and creativity will be inclined to converse more with their children and monitor their progress in school (for a more detailed discussion, see Deslandes, 1996).

Beliefs about Parents' Home-Support Roles in Child and Adolescent Education

Lareau's studies (1996) demonstrate that social class influences beliefs about home-support roles in children's education. Parents from a lower socioeconomic level tend to have a separated view of home and school, while those from the higher-income groups consider themselves partners with the school in educating their children (see Deslandes, 1996 for a detailed description of these theories). As a whole, the research suggests that parents develop beliefs and understandings regarding parental role expectations from their membership in specific groups (family, school, church, community, society in general). Their views on the development and rearing of children and adolescents and on appropriate home-support roles all influence their decision of whether or not to participate in their children's education.

2 - Parents' sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school

Do parents believe their involvement can benefit a child's educational outcomes? The self-efficacy construct is founded on theories of personal efficacy, work on attributions for school success, personal theories of intelligence and other studies of parental strategies for solving school-related problems. Taken together, these theories offer insight into the specific manifestations of parental efficacy that may be related to school involvement. According to the self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1989, 1997), parents first develop goals for their behaviors based on anticipated outcomes, then plan actions to achieve these goals, which are in turn influenced by parents' estimate of their abilities in a given situation. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy will set higher goals and have a higher commitment to achieving them. Accordingly, parents with a strongly developed sense of efficacy will be more likely to participate in their child's education, since they believe this will benefit his or her educational outcomes. At the secondary level, parents appear to have less confidence in their ability to help with school work (Eccles & Harold, 1996), and the same appears true for parents with a lower level of education (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Beliefs about Ability, Effort and Luck as Causes of Child and Adolescent School Success

Work in this area suggests that parental attributions to child effort are often associated with higher performance among children, while parental attributions to luck are associated with poorer performance. Likewise, parents will persevere in their efforts and expect success if they believe they can control desired outcomes. It may be inferred, then, that if parents believe that unstable and manageable factors, such as effort, are responsible for a child's weak performance, they will become involved in the child's education until success is achieved. On the other hand, parents may choose not to become involved if they attribute their own or their child's weak performance to stable and innate factors, such as a child's lack of ability or a parent's lack of knowledge (Henderson & Dweck, 1990; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997).

Theories of Intelligence

It appears that parents who believe in the development of intelligence, most notably through effort and perseverance, tend to emphasize the role of effort (their own and the child's) in the learning process. Research indicates that parents with a strong belief in their ability to help their child succeed are likely to have an incremental perception of intelligence, that is, they believe their involvement in the child's education will help improve his or her knowledge and performance. On the other hand, parents with a weak sense of self-efficacy tend to hold to an entity theory of intelligence: they believe that success at school depends on ability rather than effort and that their help will consequently have little impact (Henderson & Dweck, 1990).

Strategies for Solving School-Related Problems
Studies emphasize that whereas parents with a higher sense of efficacy help their child anticipate and solve current problems in school (e.g., how to work with a tutor, prepare for secondary school, change friends, etc), those with a weak sense of efficacy are more likely to rely upon the child or the school to solve problems, or upon luck or the interventions of others to improve difficult situations for their children (Baker & Stevenson, 1986).
In conclusion, parental efficacy, attributions, theories of intelligence and strategies for solving school-related problems may all explain parental decisions about involvement in children's education. Efficacy theory suggests that parents with a strong sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed tend to believe their involvement will yield positive results. Research on attributions shows a link between parents' sense of efficacy and the emphasis they place on effort, rather than ability or luck, as being essential to success. Parents who hold to incremental theories of intelligence are likely to have a higher sense of efficacy for helping a child succeed. In other words, parental involvement will be perceived as valuable if the target of the parents' efforts – the child's intelligence, ability or school performance – is viewed as something that can be changed. Finally, research suggests that parents with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to develop strategies for anticipating or solving school-related problems.

3 - General invitations, demands and opportunities for parental involvement
The question to ask here is: Do parents perceive that the child and the school want them to be involved? An affirmative answer may be based upon a child's clear affirmation of the importance of parental involvement, a school climate that is inviting and teacher attitudes and behaviors that are warm and welcoming.
General Opportunities, Invitations and Demands Presented by the Child
According to the authors mentioned here, parental involvement is highest at the primary level, declines significantly around the fourth grade and reaches its lowest peak at the secondary level (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Deslandes, 1996; Eccles & Harold, 1996). Reasons for this decline are the child's developmental stage (e.g., the adolescent who wants more independence), parents' sense of efficacy for helping their child solve problems and the greater complexity of school work at the secondary level.
The level of school performance appears to be linked to high parental involvement. Accordingly, adolescents who succeed well and have high aspirations say they receive more emotional support (encouragement, congratulations, discussions, etc.) from their parents than do others (Deslandes, 1996; Deslandes & Potvin, 1998). A few types of involvement are an exception to the rule, however. Researchers note more communication between parents and teachers and more parent-adolescent interactions concerning schoolwork during times of school-related difficulties (Deslandes, 1996; Deslandes & Royer, 1997; Lee, 1994). The child's personal qualities - temperament, learning style, preferences – are also factors that may influence parents' decision

about whether or not to become involved in the child's education (Eccles & Harold, 1993).

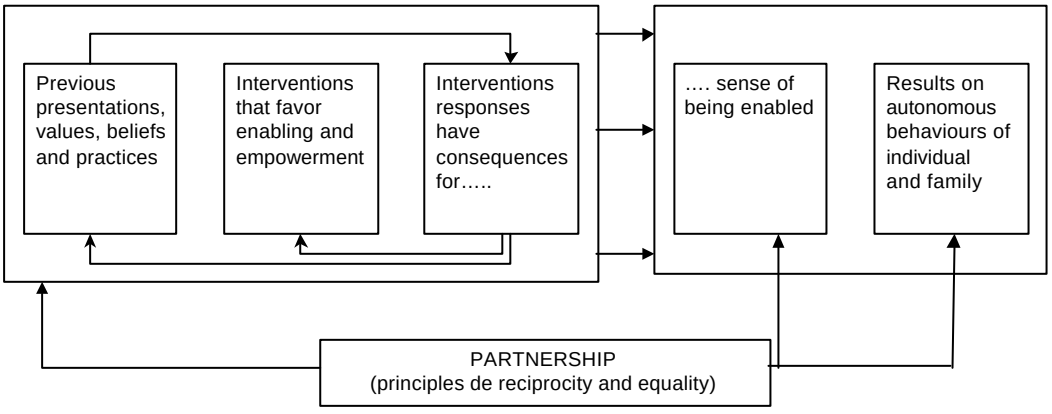
General Opportunities, Invitations and Demands Presented by Schools and Teachers

Epstein (1996, 2001) affirms that teacher and school practices, most notably school-family partnership programs, play an essential role in the promotion of parental involvement at all socioeconomic levels. This brings us to Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model (see table 1), which illustrates interpersonal and interinstitutional interactions as well as a typology of six types of parental involvement.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), however, maintain that the two other constructs - especially that of parental role construction – are even more crucial to parental decision-making than invitations. In other words, if parents do not believe they should be involved in a child's education, their sense of efficacy and perception of invitations will not be sufficient to predict their involvement. Parental sense of efficacy appears to be equally important in the decision to become involved. Clearly, the belief they are capable of helping their child succeed increases the probability of a positive decision. The lowest likelihood of involvement occurs when parental role construction is weak, that is, when parents do not believe they should be involved in their child's education and have at the same time a low sense of efficacy.

The model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler demonstrates that to increase parental involvement, the school and the teachers must focus, at least in part, upon parents' perspective on the issue. In Quebec, we are presently examining the first level of Hoover-Dempsey's model of parental involvement. The experimentation took place in May 2001. Over 1 000 parents of elementary school students and nearly 850 parents of secondary school students have filled in and returned their questionnaires (Deslandes, 2000-2003). Since parents with a high sense of efficacy who believe they should participate in their child's schooling will tend to become involved, teachers should create occasions for parent-teacher meetings and work actively to show that parents can positively influence their child's education. The following partnership framework illustrates this principle.

Table 3 - Family enabling and empowerment model



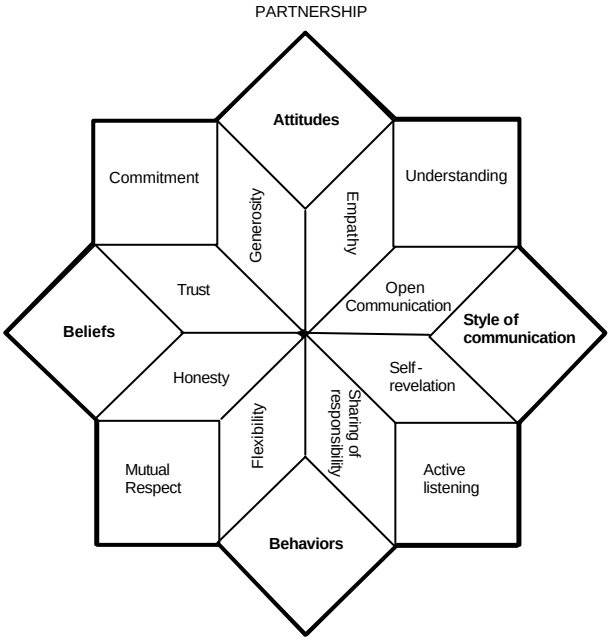
(Bouchard, 1998)

The Family Enabling and Empowerment Model Used by European, (Pourtois & Desmet, 1997), American (Dunst, Johanson, Rounds, Trivette & Hamby, 1992) and Québécois (Bouchard, 1998; Bouchard, Talbot, Pelchat & Boudreault, 1996) authors, the reciprocal partnership model is based on the principles of enabling and empowerment, and advocates a parent-teacher relation calling for a complete sharing of knowledge, skills and experiences. Empowerment involves the actualization of each person's resources and competencies, while enabling refers to parents' ability to define their role and determine the nature of their collaboration (Bouchard, 1998; Bouchard et al., 1996; Cochran, 1989; Cochran & Dean, 1991; Dunst et al., 1992).

This model describes a parent-teacher relation based on mutual exchange in which each party learns from the knowledge and experience of the other. Bouchard (1998) refers to the social pedagogy of intervention, meaning that educational attitudes, beliefs and practices facilitate interdependence and reciprocity in learning.

A partnership approach must necessarily take into account each partner's expectations and point of view (Dunst et al., 1992; Pourtois & Desmet, 1997). As well, it must be based upon a notion of equality which recognizes that each party – both the parent and the teacher – has a particular knowledge and expertise to share. Thus, parents as well as teachers manifest strengths that complement those of the other partners. Dunst et al. (1992) describe four categories of characteristics favorable for establishing a partnership (see table 4): (a) emotional predispositions (attitudes) based on trust, commitment, generosity, empathy and understanding; (b) intellectual predispositions (beliefs) based on honesty, trust, mutual respect, flexibility and the sharing of responsibility; (c) open, two-way communication that presupposes active listening and self-revelation, and (d) actions that manifest attitudes and beliefs (see Figure 4)

Figure 4 - Model of characteristics associated with partnership



Bouchard (1998) affirms that these actions are reflected in the theory of communicative action espoused by Habermas (1987, and cited in Bouchard, 1998), which discusses behaviors that express the intentions and actions of the actors in a partnership. Communicative action involves a reconciling of all points of view and a search for consensus, which approaches the principle of equality underlying the reciprocal partnership model. As mentioned above, parents are perceived as educational resources who can enrich the teacher within a relationship of mutual exchange. Bouchard et al. (1996) give a few examples of behaviors that facilitate partnership, notably, the recognition of expertise (e.g., 'Have you observed any progress?') and the recognition of collaboration (e.g., 'You're doing a lot for your child; I see you really want her grades to improve'). In short, the enabling and empowerment model described above emphasizes the use of knowledge and experience that are most likely to develop an individual's resources.

The complementary nature of the three conceptual frameworks and the notion of partnership

The relevance of Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model (1987, 1992, 1996, 2001) to the concept of partnership is seen at the organizational level. This model allows for a holistic analysis of the obstacles and facilitating factors associated with school-family partnership and of the significant role played by the actors involved in childhood education throughout the life cycle. The model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), in turn, expands on Epstein's model by emphasizing the importance of the parents' philosophy (Force B) and the role of the student (Force A) in school-family relations. What leads a parent to make the decision to become involved? Here the spheres of influence model proves inadequate, since it fails to describe the effects of family and individual psychological characteristics on the school-family partnership, and these characteristics must be examined in order to determine effective activities for encouraging partnership. Among the most promising activities in the case of difficult-to-reach parents are those whereby parents, teachers, schools and students create opportunities for the social construction of the parental role, including collaboration and a higher sense of efficacy. The enabling and empowerment model, moreover, refocuses our attention on the interactional dimensions at the center of the spheres of influence model. It highlights the often difficult-to-bridge gap between intentions and actual achievement, particularly with respect to the parents of problem students. The model is founded upon attitudes and behaviors that are essential to the development, use and increase of individual competencies. Today there seems to be a growing awareness that individual parent-teacher meetings marked by mutual respect, empathy and sharing can have repercussions on the eventual engagement of parents in partnership activities implemented for all the parents of children in the school. To sum up, the three models described here complement each other to the extent they lead to strategies for improving the efficacy of all the actors involved, thereby creating successful school-family partnerships.

The examination of these theoretical models, particularly the model of enabling and empowerment, has contributed to a new understanding of partnership by emphasizing the study of parent-teacher interactions. This leads to the following question: Can we maintain that a genuine partnership - that is, a reciprocal relationship - exists now in the so-called *regular* schools of Quebec? Based on our observations and the work we are doing at present, the notion of partnership currently being advocated consists, rather, of collaboration in response to teachers' requests with a view to examining ways in which parents can help teachers improve their children's academic performance. Nevertheless, this attempt and others like it meet with resistance, since these practices have generally not been the custom among French Quebecers, especially at the secondary level. The theoretical models, it would

appear, describe an idea whose time is yet to come.

We've seen that certain conditions are essential to the establishment of a genuine partnership. First of all, we must ask if partnership is both a desired and desirable option. Next, the expectations and perceptions of the different groups involved in childhood education must be taken into account. We support the view advanced by the OECD in its 1997 report that the development of partnership is an ongoing process that is continually subject to negotiation. At the moment, we view partnership as an ideal or goal towards which parents, teachers and schools must work together. This vision, however, is not clouded by romantic notions of partnership that fail to take its limitations into account. We realize that partnership is not a panacea and that, if it is to be successful, the right balance must be achieved among the actors involved. Nevertheless, we believe partnership to be a path of the future that requires a complete change in our ways of thinking and acting, and that this is a change our policymakers heartily endorse (CSE, 1996).

Dunst et al. (1992) emphasize that to establish a genuine partnership takes time. As an example, the school could make teachers more available for discussions with parents, or allow for the hiring of a liaison officer to facilitate parent-teacher interactions. In this era of budget cuts, is it realistic to think a genuine partnership can be developed within such a context? As far as teachers are concerned, this vision of partnership has particularly important consequences for communicative action. We can imagine program orientations where the acquiring of skills and experience in interpersonal relations will become increasingly more important. All in all, it appears that partnership between the school and family (and even the community) will constitute an interesting development in the decade ahead.

To sum up, Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model (1987, 1992, 1996, 2001) is an inspiration for its overall vision of the different factors that influence school-family partnerships. The parental involvement model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), for its part, allows for a better understanding of the reasons for a parent's choice to participate or not in school-related activities: parental role construction, sense of efficacy and invitations to become involved appear to be the determining factors. A respect for and openness to others are the psychological prerequisites for all efforts to promote parental involvement. Recognition of the value of others and the fulfillment of their potential are at the very heart of the enabling and empowerment model (Bouchard, 1998; Dunst et al., 1992), which is based on communication skills that foster cooperation and partnership. In the majority of so-called regular schools in Quebec today, partnership tends to be seen as a collaborative affair. Reciprocal partnership is, for the moment, a goal that remains to be achieved. But things are progressing. In May 2001, the current presenter was mandated by the Quebec Ministry of Education (Deslandes, 2001-2004) to work on research action projects with two elementary and two secondary schools in order to identify models of implementation and evaluation of family-school-community partnership programs.

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Family education and implications for partnership with schools in Spain

Raquel-Amaya Martínez González

The family as an Educational and Learning context

One of the most influential social contexts for the development of human beings, which constitutes a true factor of individual and social diversity, is the family microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). It is the first social context that embraces individuals, and from which they receive the greatest influences all through life due to the direct relationship maintained with the family members.

From the Ecological model of Bronfenbrenner, also known as *System of Systems*, it is considered that the diverse social environments where individuals interact, and which influence their development, are cupped one into another, graphically shaping a concentric system which starts with the set of values, principles and norms predominant in a particular culture (Macrosystem). This macrosystem directly influences the characteristics of those communitarian environments in which individuals interact (Exosystem). These, in turn, condition the nearest environments in which children develop, such as the family and the school, with which they interact directly (Microsystems). These microsystems do not remain isolated, but are, in turn, interacting and modifying one another through the Mesosystem. All this web of bi-directional and dynamic relationships among the already mentioned systems have an influence on individuals (Ontosystem), thus conditioning both their development and socialization processes, as well as the products, results and achievements that derived from them.

Taking this model into consideration, we can understand the family as a *social, educational and learning context, which may contribute, given the adequate conditions, to the human and personal development of all its members, either children, young people or adults, in any evolutive developmental stage* (Laosa and Sigel, 1982; Millán, 1996; Rodrigo and Palacios, 1998). But it also contributes to the *social development*, given the socialization function that the family carries out through education (Inkeless, 1966; Hoffman, 1984; Martínez González, 1994a; Segalen, 1993).

The family microsystem influences the personal development of the individuals as a consequence of what happens in three basic family dimensions: structural, attitudinal and behavioral (Martínez González, 1994[a], 1996a). Many parents are conscious of the fundamental role they play in their children's development and process of socialization, and because of that, more and more frequently they demand information and education to better cope with the challenges of both, every evolutive stage of the individual and family development (Martínez González, 1990,1994b, 1998, 1999; Martínez González and Corral Blanco, 1991, 1996). Parents' education constitutes an unfulfilled subject in our society and educational system, from which the education of individuals is articulated in multiple phases and for the development of multiple functions, but it does not consider the necessary education to

perform one of the most complex and with more social responsibility function: to be educators of children for life.

Family education

This takes us to consider the need to develop the disciplinary field of *Family Education* (Martínez González, 1999). Arcus and his colleagues (1993) have pointed out three main *aims* to be reached through this Education: 1) to facilitate families their contribution to both, the development of the individual potential of their members and the family as a whole, 2) to prevent family problems from arising, and 3) to help families to overcome the difficulties they may come across at any time.

From these aims we can draw the *Objectives* towards the practice of parents' education should tend to, and which have been proposed by the National Commission on Family Life Education and the National Council on Family Relations (USA). According to Thomas and Arcus (1992), these objectives can be summarized in *strengthening and enriching the individual and family well-fair*. These general objectives can be made concrete in the following *specific objectives*: 1) To learn to understand oneself and the others, 2) to facilitate the developmental and human behavior processes within the family all through the different stages of family life, 3) to be familiar with marriage and family patterns and processes, 4) to acquire effective strategies for family life, 5) to stimulate the individuals' potential to perform family roles at present and in the future, and 6) to facilitate the development of abilities to keep the family together when difficulties arise.

The attainment of these objectives should be guided by some *Principles* associated to Family Education practice, which takes into account the *individuals' and families' needs*, as well as the *respect for the diversity of circumstances and values of the families* (Arcus, Schvaneveldt & Moss, 1993).

The aims, objectives and principles we are considering should be concreted in the practice of Family Education, which leads us to mention the *Contents* of the programmes and actions that could be undertaken. These contents can be classified into two main areas, according to the National Council on Family Relations (1984): 1) Thematic Areas and 2) Processes of communication decision taking and problem solving.

These main processes to be developed when putting Family Education into practice need a setting and some agents, which may both be diverse, but maybe they efficiency is higher when developed in the school setting by its educational agents. This context allows us to take into consideration the Mesosystem mentioned by Bronfenbrenner (1979), from which bi-directional relationships among the two main microsystems can be analyzed: the family and the school.

Mesosystem: family-school partnership

In several articles we have pointed out the importance of promoting satisfactory family-school relationships (Martínez González, 1992ª, 1996ª, b,c; Martínez González and Corral Blanco, 1991, 1996), as well as the methodological aspects related to action-research that may lead to the effective implementation of processes in this field (Martínez González, 1992b, 1997).

The need to promote family-school partnership does not come just from conceptual and theoretical considerations, but also from the parents' demands for information, participation and education; thus, this need is experiential and real and not merely conceptual. This is the conclusion which comes from many studies carried out on this subject; for example, in case studies developed through action-research in Spanish schools (Martínez González et al., 1994), parents, teachers and students came across the following partnership needs: 1) to communicate more in order to put in common the *educative objectives* that both, parents and teachers have as

regards the child/student, 2) to dialogue and act together more frequently so that teachers can better know *parents' attitudes and behaviors* as regards their children, 3) to communicate more often to talk about *parents' and teachers' concerns*, 4) to improve actions that help *parents to better bring up their children*, and 5) to organize more activities to *stimulate parents participation at school*.

In another study conducted by Martínez González et al. (1993) with 328 parents, we could notice again the need to promote parents' participation at schools, as it is shown in the following table:

Comparative table of percentages y ranks associated to parents' agreement with several issues related to their children's school

	Very much	Little	Nothing at all	Do not know	No answer
It is easy to contact teachers	80,5 (1)	11,6 (4)	0,6 (4)	3,0 (5)	4,3 (2,5)
Parents are welcome to school	76,2 (2)	6,4 (5)	0,0 (5)	13,1 (2)	4,3 (2,5)
Teachers are polite and communicative with parents	73,2 (3)	17,7 (3)	2,7 (3)	3,4 (4)	3,0 (5)
Teachers try to help students who have learning difficulties	57,9 (4)	18,0 (2)	4,9 (2)	15,5 (1)	3,7 (4)
The school organizes activities in which parents can participate and contribute to their children's education	38,1 (5)	29,9 (1)	13,4 (1)	12,8 (3)	5,8 (1)

Given these needs, it seems appropriate to promote actions that stimulate communication among parents, teachers and students which, in turn, facilitate their co-operation in school activities, so that schools can gain educational quality. Among the most relevant initiatives to be developed in this area is *teachers´ training for partnership* (Davies, 1996; Martínez González, 1996; OCDE, 1997). To this regard, we have organized an *Action-Training Seminar* at the Department of Education (Oviedo University, Spain) composed of professionals *who develop their educational activity in different academic levels*: principals and teachers of state and semi-state schools, involved in Kindergarten, Primary and High school levels, University teachers of Education and Pedagogists. Through *co-operative action-research* we have arranged parents and teachers groups at the schools, which is allowing us to evaluate and detect partnership needs and to organize some activities to provide them with appropriate answers (Martínez González et al, 2000).

Parents' education programmes

One of the most needed co-operation actions pointed out by both, parents and teachers in many studies, is parents' education. For example, in a study carried out with Spanish parents about issues related to the prevention of drug consumption from the family context, Martínez González et al. (1998) found out that 64% of the sample admitted they did not have enough information to start doing something in case their children should get into drug problems.

Do you have enough information to be able to start doing something in case your child gets into drug problems?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	98	29.9
No	210	64.0
No answer	20	6.1
Total	328	100.0

Parents' education, as we have mentioned before, constitutes a clear lack in our educational system, to which some associations or agencies are trying to find an answer. Parents' education can take a diversity of formats, but it seems more effective when it is developed through programmes which incorporate active and participatory methodologies (Bartau et al., 1999; Martínez González, 1999).

The perspective which has dominated the *Design* of these programmes is that proposed by Tyler, based on the *attainment of aims and objectives*. These perspective has led to a *Summative evaluation tendency*, directed to assess to what extend these objectives are reached, many times forgetting to take into account the contexts and circumstances that affect the development of the programmes. It is a perspective mainly focused on a *quantitative approach* of programme evaluation in which the *relationship between costs and benefits* are looked for, and which is mainly performed through *experimental methodologies*.

The objectives defined for the programmes must be coherent with the educational needs parents have. Because of that, it is recommended to analyze and to identify these needs through a previous evaluation process. For example, before developing a programme with parents of teenagers, the following parents' needs were detected:

parents' concerns about their children's bringing up	**learning expectations to take part in the programme**	**reasons for taking part in the programme**
To be able **to guide him properly** That he loses interest in his **studies** The time he **spends out** and the **friends he has** That he may consume **drugs**	To have a better relationship with my teenager and to learn to bring him up properly	Because he has a difficult age and I have doubts about the future and whether I am doing things properly
To help them to cope with this critical age of adolescence Their **friends,** hobbies, their activities during the weekends (**drugs, tobacco, alcohol**) Their interest in their **studies**, their **future Lies** The **limits** of behavior	To **understand them**, to **communicate** with them, to **accept them** as they are	To be in **contact with other parents** who have similar problems and to learn from them and from the coordinator of the programme
She does not like **studying** and she does not make **any effort** at all. She always has to have the **last word**. Her **friends**	To be able to help my daughter to learn how **to behave correctly** both, at home and outside.	To learn to understand them.
What worries me most about my son are **drugs** His **friends** That he does not know how **to cope with problems**	**How I should behave** when he has a problem	To learn **to understand** what is happening around me
That they may consume **drugs** Their **friends**, the **environment** How they should **cope with failure**.	**How I should behave** when problems arise	To learn

Once the programme has been designed, it can be *developed and evaluated*.

Programme evaluation

According to Arcus et al. (1993), the evaluation of family education programmes is sheldon performed, and when it is so it is usually done taking into account a *Summative approach*, based on the analysis of results according to the previously proposed *objectives* and the *cost-effectiveness relationship*, accountability and funding. The *quantitative research methodology using experimental and survey designs* is applied in this evaluative perspective. According to this author, there is a need to incorporate a *Formative approach* to family education programme evaluation, where *processes* are taken into account in order to analyze to what extend *all the factors* involved in the design and development of the programme, including objectives, are suitable (Stufflebeam et al., 1971). It is also important to consider *parents' interpretation* of the programme because they affect the results obtained. The aim, in short, is to identify, even before the programme has finished, which factors and processes can be improved and where the programme must be reoriented. The Joint

Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation has proposed standards to ensure the quality of programme evaluation (1994),which are classified into four categories:1) Utility, 2) Feasibility, 3) Propriety and 4) Accuracy.

In this sense, in our Department of Education at Oviedo University, we have developed an evaluative research on parenting education programmes which gathers parents' opinions and evaluation on every phase of the programmes (Martínez González et. al., 1998): 1) Organization of the educational activities, 2) Introduction of the activities, 3) Contents, 4) Methodology, 5) Coordination, and 6) Evaluation.

A fundamental issue in the evaluation of programmes is to identify the *indicators* and procedures which inform about the quality of the programme and the extend in which the expected results are being reached. Once the indicators have been introduced and the results of the programmes analyzed, it is possible to observe not only the positive effects obtained but also their limitations.

One of the most generally used indicators in the evaluation of educational activities is the *degree of satisfaction* that people get from participating in them. This indicator could be made concrete through the suggestions these people make in order to foster other people's participation, and also through the degree of interest that they themselves feel to participate in a similar activity again. In this sense, most of the parents (93%) who participated in a study carried out by Martínez González et al. (1998), informs that they would certainly encourage other parents to participate in such educational activities, and 84.2% of them admitted that they themselves would participate once more. 10.5% said they would not participate and 5.3% did not answer.

An example of some of the reasons parents pointed out to encourage the participation of other parents are the following:

'Yes, I would participate again to better understand drugs dependency and the way this can be prevented'
'Yes, because these educational activities help to understand how to have a better relationship with your children and your partner'
'Yes, because many things can be learnt; they solve your doubts and also you can share your impressions with those of other parents; it is important to talk and to listen, especially in a time in which we lack communication'
'Yes, but you find few people interested in these kind of activities. Nevertheless I would recommend them so as to learn new strategies and to have a reason to go out'.

Conclusions

Taking conceptual, methodological and practical issues on intervention in the family as referential, it seems there is a need to reflect on the practice of family education, on the development of educational programmes for parents and on their evaluation. More and more frequently, parents are demanding parenting education and schools could try to give them an answer organizing parenting programmes as a way to promote partnership. Many parents does not show an interest in taking part in decision making processes about schools policies, but they are really interested in learning about how they can promote a better communication with their children to effectively contribute to their development. Parenting programmes carried out within schools can help to build effective parents-teachers partnership.

These reflections should allow us to project some actions for the future which are needed to keep on advancing in this disciplinary field of Family Education on both, theoretical and practical grounds. They have to do with epistemological and methodological issues, as well as with considering diversity within the family and the role of the family educator. In these fields we need to keep on advancing to generate evidence about the impact that Family Education has on individuals, families and the society as a whole.

That is to say, we need to analyze to which extend parents' education is really preventive and contributes to strengthen and enrich the individual, the family, the school and the society, as it is derived from its main objective.

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Family-school liaisons in Cyprus: an investigation of families' perspectives and needs

Loizos Symeou

Introduction

The recognition that families are important in influencing their children's educational achievement has stimulated major efforts to improve family-school relationships in educational systems. Hence, nowadays, the family is considered a significant stakeholder in school enterprises.

The rubrics 'parental involvement' and 'parental participation' in schools have often been used by international literature interchangeably in order to describe a broad spectrum of family-school contacts and relationships. Nonetheless, the two terms embed two different concepts. Parental 'involvement' refers to procedures which allow parents to have a role in what is happening in the school, but where the nature and extent of this role is predetermined by the professional staff of the school, the teachers. In this case, the parents' role is confined to spectators of events or activities which schools organize for parents (Davies & Johnson, 1996; Tomlinson, 1991), or of activities that can be described as 'parental duties' (Vining, 1997) or 'voluntary labour' (Reeve, 1993). Parental 'involvement' practices are maintained to be concerned mainly with the well-being of the parent's own child (Munn, 1993). The term 'participation' signals a shift to a broader and different range of relationships between families and schools in both content and intent. In this case, both parties share responsibility and authority on a continuous basis. This shift places parents explicitly within the collective well-being of the whole school and all the children in it (Munn, 1993). It is more likely to presuppose a revitalization of the administration and operation of schooling through procedures that allow parents to take an active part and full-scale participation in school governorship and decision-making at all educational levels (Soliman, 1995; Stapes & Morris, 1993). When family-school relationships reach the level of participation, one can refer to a 'partnership' (Martin, Ranson, & Tall, 1997).

Despite the vivid debate among international researchers in relation to the outcomes of relative innovations, there is currently a widely accepted agreement that a school culture which supports active family engagement in the school can bring about specific improvements in pupils' performance, behavior and motivation, general teacher functioning, and parental confidence and self-efficacy (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Henderson, 1987; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Epstein, 1986; 1987; 1992; Reeve, 1993; Bourmina, 1995; Connors & Epstein, 1995; Benito & Filp, 1996; Davies & Johnson, 1996; Krumm, 1996). Strong family-school liaisons have also been suggested to develop a general family and community support for the schools (Epstein, 1992; Townsend, 1995) and have been cited as one of the prerequisites for school effectiveness (Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994; O'Connor, 1994; Sammons, Hillman, Mortimore, 1995; Ainley, 1995; Coleman, 1998; Pasiardis, 1998).

In Cyprus, a country with a highly centralized educational system, families and schools seem to be largely operating independently from each other and keeping their communication to a minimum. Indicative of the extent of the paucity of substantial family-school liaisons is the lack of any recent relative legislative action. Correspondingly, the available literature on the existing relationships between schools and families and the boundaries of family involvement in schools is still extremely limited. Moreover, the attitudes of families concerning this issue have not yet been explored in depth.

The purpose of the study

This paper presents the findings of a nation-wide study, which aimed at investigating Cypriot families' perspectives as far as the ways family-school nexuses have been set up in the state primary education of Cyprus, and whether, and if so how, these should be transformed. Additionally, it draws conclusions on differences in practices of different school settings and differences in the attitudes of the sub-groups comprising families. Finally, the paper tries to generate a framework for future innovations in the field of family-school liaisons in Cyprus.

Addressing these issues is extremely important, due to paucity of previous research in the area of family-school liaisons Cyprus. A nation-wide study which would provide generalisable results, could underpin broader theoretical considerations and initiate debate on the issue, thus render it a question valid for further research and future investigations. This may apply particularly now that educational reforms are an issue of vivid debate in Cyprus and that the educational status quo of the country might be influenced by the likelihood of Cyprus's full membership in the European Union. Investigating families' thoughts and understandings, and revealing their 'cultural models' in relation to the area would be of extreme significance for introducing any relevant innovation and change (Fullan, 1991).

The second aspect of the research's importance is broader. At an international level, where family-school relations appear prominently on the agendas of policy-makers, professionals and parents, the outcomes of this research would constitute a reference for the current realities concerning the issue in Cyprus. As Davies and Johnson (1996) suggest, such attempts contribute to the international exchange of ideas and practices in the area across national boundaries.

Methodology

In order to achieve the research objectives and achieve generalisable results, a survey was conducted among a random sample of the families of Cyprus state funded primary schools. The survey took place from March to May 2000. The selection of the sample was based on a multi-staged proportionate stratified process. A total of 348 family members (0.58% of the families' population having a child at a state primary school) from 173 schools (out of an overall population of 343 Cyprus state primary schools) participated in the research.

For the research's purposes, a questionnaire was constructed. This was pre-tested and piloted before the actual survey took place. The research device enquired in its first section the respondents' demographic characteristics. Its second section was asking the respondents to indicate the frequency specific practices aiming at linking families with their child's school were put into action in their school during the school-year 1999-2000, whereas the third section inquired whether respondents would actually like the respective practices to be further pursued. Questions in the latter two sections were presented in a structured, pre-coded format with ordinal coding. A question followed asking the respondents to indicate the most important practice/s of all the practices they were previously presented. The questionnaire's last section was an open-ended question inviting respondents to express comments and further ideas in relation to family-school relationships. The last two

questions served mostly for checking and assuring data reliability. The collected quantitative data was analyzed with the statistical package SPSS. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were derived from the quantitative analysis, whereas qualitative analysis was used to analyze the content of the last open-ended question.

Results

a. Answers to the first research question: Current realities

Respondents' statements on the most frequent practices currently established to link families with their child's school underwent factor analysis in an attempt to group and categorize these practices. Seven factors were extracted, explaining 63% of the variance and a mean score for each factor was calculated. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the seven factors.

The first factor/grouping of practices, 'All families formal outreach' practices, consists of formal practices the school initiates and aim at informing families about its function, demonstrating its work and training families on school-related issues in a formal way. The second grouping, 'Teacher-family close contact' practices, consisted of practices bringing families in close contact with their child's teacher in a mode which allowed the establishment of more informal relationships. The third and sixth grouping of practices consisted of practices aiming at providing families with oral information about their specific child, the former in relation to the child's working habits and attitudes, and the latter in relation to the child's in-school attainment. The fourth grouping, 'Families' voice' practices, is comprised of practices that might introduce a participatory mode in family-school liaisons and put across family's needs and priorities. 'Written informing' grouping consists of practices established by the teachers aiming at providing written information to families about their specific child, the class or the schoolwork. Finally, 'Labour' practices consist of practices that demand families to offer their voluntary labour in mundane school jobs.

As indicated by the mean score for the above factors, the factors that received the highest means were both groupings relating to the school providing oral information to the families about their specific child. These were followed by 'All families formal outreach' practices, whereas the remaining factors/groupings received very low means, in particular 'Teacher-parent close contact' and 'Labour' practices.

In order to investigate differences in the ways the extracted groupings are being currently set up in different school and class settings, analysis of variance was conducted. This revealed a number of significant differences. Families in rural schools were found to experience significantly more close contact with teachers in comparison to families in urban and semi-urban areas (factor 2: f=1,58, df=254, p=0,001), to receive more oral information about their child's studying habits (factor 3: f=2,00, df=253, p=0,027), to receive more written information (factor 5: f=3,06, df=252, p=0,021), and to be invited more often to offer their voluntary labour (factor 7: f=19,23, df=248, p=0,005). Families of schools with a small number of pupils, i.e. with less than 80 pupils, were found to experience significantly more teacher close contact than in larger schools (factor 2: f=4,42, df=256, p=0,013), to have their voice heard more (factor 4: f=4,90, df=252, p=0,008), and to be more often invited to offer labour in their child's school (factor 7: f=15,73, df=250, p=0,00). Additionally, families in schools with a low SES and low educational background catchments area were found to experience statistically more frequent invitations to offer their voluntary labour (factor 7) in comparison to schools with more middle and high class families (f=15,97, df=244, p=0,049) and secondary and tertiary educational background families (f=8,08, df=241, p=0,027), respectively.

Table 1 - Factors/Groupings of currently established practices (loadings)

Statement: During the current school year my child's teachers or school have…	**1st** All families formal outreach	**2nd** Teacher-family close contact	**3rd** Oral informing for a specific child (1)	**4th** Families' voice	**5th** Written informing	**6th** Oral informing for a specific child (2)	**7th** Labour
B13: Organized a workshop/seminar on parenting skills	0,81						
B12: Organized a workshop/seminar on how parents should help their child with their schooling	0,74						
B14: Invited me to events or gatherings during the afternoon or the evening	0,67						
B11: Invited me to a morning event in the school at which all school families were invited	0,63						
B6: Sent home a letter or memo concerning all families	0,43						
B9: Invited me to help during a lesson in the child's classroom		0,77					
B18: The teacher phoned us at home		0,65					
B17: The teacher visited us at home		0,57					
B8: Invited me to attend a lesson in the child's classroom as a viewer		0,53					
B10: Invited me to a morning event in the child's classroom		0,40					
B2: Provided me with oral information on how children should study at home			0,81				
B1: Provided me with oral information on how children should work at school			0,80				
B21: Asked families to participate in committees which deal with issues that concern the school (apart from the PA)				0,70			
B22: Asked families to inform the school about their child's needs				0,67			
B5: Sent me a report informing me about the child's progress and needs					0,68		

Statement: During the current school year my child's teachers or school have…	**1st** All families formal outreach	**2nd** Teacher-family close contact	**3rd** Oral informing for a specific child (1)	**4th** Families' voice	**5th** Written informing	**6th** Oral informing for a specific child (2)	**7th** Labour
B20: Sent us a report on the specific aims of a particular teaching period					0,67		
B19: Sent us a newsletter or a bulletin					0,57		
B7: Sent home a notice concerning the child when there was a need					0,41		
B4: Informed me when we met about the child's behavior at school						0,82	
B3: Informed me when we met about the child's achievement						0,76	
B16: Asked families to assist with student supervision on class trips, performances, or sport events							0,81
B15: Asked families to assist with school maintenance							0,73
Mean*	1,20	0,28	1,63	0,32	0,41	2,35	0,25
Standard Deviation	0,70	0,42	1,00	0,59	0,57	0,69	0,55
Reliability Alpha	0,76	0,66	0,89	0,58	0,62	0,73	0,58
% of variance	12,03	9,59	9,30	9,11	8,39	7,89	7,11

*Scale: 0=Never, 1=Once or twice, 2=Sometimes, 3=Many times

As far as the pupils' class-level, significant differences were found in the case of factor 3, namely the oral information teachers provide on pupils' studying habits. It was revealed that families having a child in the first two grades tend to receive significantly more such information in comparison to families with a child at the upper classes (f=5,71, df=255, p=0,004). The child's class size was also found to be a significant variant. Teachers of classes with a large number of pupils, (i.e. more than 25), in comparison to teachers of classes with a smaller number of pupils seem to establish less contact with families (factor 2: f=12,00, df=253, p=0,00), to provide less oral information to families about their child's studying habits (factor 3: f=3,87, df=253, p=0,02), to send families less written information (factor 5: f=21,47, df=251, p=0,00), and to involve them less in voluntary labour activities (factor 7: f=9,01, df=249, p=0,00).

Another variable which was found to introduce differences in the ways different families were experiencing their relationships with their child's school was whether or not the family was participating in the school's Parents' Association (PA). T-test analysis revealed that family's membership in the school's PA signaled significantly more experience of close contact with their child's teacher (factor 2: f=9,73,

df=249, p=0,004), more opportunities of having their voice heard (factor 4: f=14,87, df=245, p=0,05), and more often invitations to offer their voluntary labour (factor 7: f=17,90, df=244, p=0,011).

b. Answers to the second research question: Attitudes toward future changes

Families' responses to whether they would like to see a further pursuit of these practices underwent also factor analysis. Once more, a mean score for each factor was calculated in an attempt to group the statements and understand more families' priorities for future changes. Five factors were extracted, explaining 58,61% of the variance (Table 2).

Factor 1, 'Families' enculturation' practices, consisted of practices initiated by the school and aiming at training and demonstrating families how to cultivate habits that would align families' work with the work done at school. The second factor contained practices that could be classified as those involving parents with the 'Class's/school's collective well-being', whereas the third comprises practices that signal a more informal contact among the two agents. The next factor was comprised by 'Oral information for the family's specific child' practices and the last factor was extracted from 'Direct line information for the family's specific child' practices.

The mean score to these factors reveals that families desire all the above groupings of practices to be further pursued in a high degree. Their main concern, though, is to be provided with a direct line of information concerning their own child. Families seem additionally to embrace practices initiated by the schools that aim their 'school' enculturation, so that they can be able to align their efforts to enhance their child's schooling with the school's efforts.

Table 2 - Attitudes towards changes in practices (loadings)

Statement: My child's school should more in comparison with what hey do now	**1st** Families' enculturation	**2nd** Class/ school collective well-being	**3rd** Informal contact	**4th** Oral information for a specific child	**5th** Direct line information for a specific child
C2: Explain to me when we meet the way children should work at home	0,78				
C1: Explain to me when we meet the way children should work at school	0,77				
C13: Organize training workshops/seminars for the parents on parenting skills	0,76				
C12: Organize training workshops/seminars for the parents on how parents should help their child with their schooling	0,68				
C21: Send to pupils' homes a report on the specific aims of a particular teaching period	0,53				
C8: Invite me to attend a lesson in the child's class as a viewer	0,50				
C9: Invite me to help during a lesson in the child's classroom	0,49				

Statement: My child's school should do more in comparison with what hey do now	**1st** Families' enculturation	**2nd** Class/ school collective well-being	**3rd** Informal contact	**4th** Oral information for a specific child	**5th** Direct line information for a specific child
C15: Ask families to assist with school maintenance		0,73			
C20: Send home a classroom newsletter or a bulletin		0,70			
C22: Ask families to participate in committees which deal with issues that concern the school		0,65			
C14: Organize events or gatherings during the afternoon or the evening		0,60			
C24: Conduct research to explore families' perceptions of the school		0,55			
C10: Organize morning events or gatherings for the class's parents in the child's classroom		0,50			
C18: The teacher to come to our home to pay a visit			0,72		
C17: Ask families to assist without being paid with the supervision of students who remain at school until their parents come to pick them up			0,63		
C16: Ask families to assist with student supervision on class trips, student performances, or sport events			0,57		
C11: Organize morning events or gatherings in the school for all school families			0,50		
C6: Send me home notices concerning all the families			0,49		
C4: To provide me with oral information on the child's behavior at school				0,83	
C3: To provide me with oral information on the child's school achievements				0,82	
C19: The teacher to phone me in order to inform me about something that concerns the child					0,78
C7: Send me home a notice concerning the child when there is a need					0,68
C5: Send me reports informing me about the child's progress and needs					0,55
Mean*	1,65	1,54	1,33	1,19	1,66
Standard Deviation	0,37	0,41	0,48	0,36	0,41
Reliability Alpha	0,77	0,71	0,69	0,79	0,56
% of variance	27,74	11,78	6,92	6,71	5,43

* Scale: 0=Less than now/Not at all, 1=As now, 2=More than now

The above findings were validated by the analysis of the responses to the question asking families to identify the most important of the practices they were presented in Section 3. The practices found to be comprising the two most significant groupings described above were also found to be the most highly valued by families, alongside with practices comprising the 'Oral information for a specific child' grouping. The latter, even though received the lowest mean score of all the groupings of practices considered as needed to be further pursued, were the practices rated more highly in terms of importance to families, thus indicating that currently this is succeeded at a high and satisfactory degree.

Investigation of differences in attitudes towards future changes between sub samples of the families' population revealed variance in priorities only in one case between low SES families and high and middle class families. More particularly, analysis of variance suggested that low SES families demand more than families with a higher status to receive oral information about their own child's schooling (factor 4: f=18,69, df=254, p=0,015).

Discussion

The main conclusion of the data analysis is that currently implemented practices trying to link families and schools in Cyprus are restricted, a finding that has been also demonstrated by small-scale relevant Cyprus research studies (Georgiou, 1996; 1998; Phtiaka, 1994; 1996; 1998). These were found to be limited mainly to practices aiming at providing families information about their own child, about the schools' function and how families can support the school's work. Conclusively, primary schools in Cyprus appear currently to be establishing procedures, practices and activities, which they, themselves, initiate and predetermined, what has been claimed to be parental 'involvement' and not 'participation' (Tomlinson, 1991). At the same time, practices that might bring families in close contact with professionals or of a non-professional-like nature are rarely established.

Additionally, it can be claimed that families tend to express a desire for a variety of practices to be pursued more, thus indicating a gap between their needs and their schools' programmes and practices. Such a gap between established practices and families individual beliefs is identified by both international (Cutright, 1994; Epstein & Dauber, 1991) and Cyprus literature (Georgiou, 1996; 1998).

Nonetheless, families' evaluation of specific practices aiming linking them with their child's schools and their query for modifying these relationships imply mild modes of involvement. Cypriot families – to use Munn's (1993) relevant distinction- are mainly concerned with being 'involved' in practices that secure the well-being of their own child, and not getting engaged in 'participation' practices relating to the collective well-being of the whole school and all the children in it. Findings suggesting that families in Cyprus favor their involvement in schools at 'the various aspects of school governing' (Georgiou, 1996, p.35) cannot be supported by this study. A significant conclusion of the current study is that the nature and the extent of family-school nexuses in Cyprus primary schools are likely to be related to a number of external variables. At the school-level, it appears that the school's size and its location introduce significant differences. Schools with a small pupils' population and rural schools, as opposed to bigger and non-rural schools, respectively, seem to be experiencing a more general vivid link with families, with significantly more teacher-family contacts, opportunities for exchanging information and invitations to families to offer voluntary labour. These findings might contradict international studies, which have showed that schools in urban areas use more parental involvement techniques (e.g. Epstein, 1987).

At the teacher's-level, it was found that teachers of lower grades tend to exchange more information with families than teachers of upper grades, whereas teachers of smaller classes seem to be currently linked with their pupils' families in more of a variety of ways, something that corresponds to findings outside Cyprus (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Finally, at the family's level, the variable of being a member of the school's Parents' Association was found to have a great impact on the way a family is involved in its child's schooling. Families which were members of this association are likely to be more involved with in-school activities, namely to have more close contact with their child's teacher, to have their voice heard more and to be offering more frequently their voluntary labour. This privilege for PA's members and their own children was also demonstrated in some of the families' answers to the questionnaire's open-question. One mother who was not a member of her school's association said:
I'm concerned very much about the behavior of most of the teachers, who, due to their regular contact with children's parents who are either members of the Parents' Association or have a high-said social position, favor their children at the different school activities, even in the teaching and, thus children with more abilities are overlooked.

Related might be the findings that, while families' views as far as future changes are homogeneous, families of low SES request more oral information for their child than their counterparts (thus indicating that currently they might not be experiencing such an informing in a satisfactory degree), as also that schools in low SES catchments areas were found to invite more often families to offer their voluntary labour than schools in higher SES catchments areas. All these issues direct attention to the social inequalities to family-school liaisons described in many international studies (Epstein, 1987; Lareau, 2000; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Vincent, 1996).

Concluding suggestions

If the aim of schools in Cyprus is to establish stronger nexuses with families and optimally to develop a partnership in educating pupils, it is primarily required to change and reconstruct expectations and perceptions of the family and the school, in order to achieve their mutual understanding. This will be the first step towards the road of 'participation'.

This study revealed families' current constructs and models, which are prerequisites of such a change. The identification of families' needs for a direct and immediate line of information about their child's schooling, and their readiness for their 'school' enculturation and their surge for more information on pedagogical and educational issues, might be the starting point of any small or large scale innovative attempts. The fact that families appear to be more or less homogeneous in their queries dictates the wider and generalisable readiness of families for the particular changes. The school, as professional educators, planners and system managers if family involvement, or even better participation, is to occur, must be able to take this initiative to facilitate and encourage such a process.

During any such innovations, special attention should be paid to the differences currently appearing in the ways families and school are linked. Urban and larger schools, as well as professionals teaching at the upper-class levels and larger classes will need to put a stronger effort in achieving such an aim, since it appears that their circumstances hinder vividness in liaising with pupils' families. Of a more ethical consideration and attention deserves the way schools relate to families of a different SES background, and particularly the current discrepancies in the way schools relate to families which are members of the Parents' Association.

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Government, school and parents in the Netherlands: every man to his trade

Loes van Tilborg & Wander van Es

Summer 2001 the research institute Sardes produced a report by order of the City of Rotterdam in which the triangle government-school-parents was analyzed. In this article we give an impression of some of the results.

Government pedagogics

Nowadays parents in the Netherlands are offered a variety of activities that can be described as government pedagogics; others know what is best for parents, what is best for their children and what parental involvement is about especially in relation to school careers of their own children. It is clear that parents don't take the government supply of activities for granted. It is also clear that parents in the Netherlands have new demands like childcare or after-school care. What else do parents want? And what are the expectations of government and schools about parental involvement?

Government and parents have a legal relationship according to which parents are supposed to raise their children properly. In addition to this thin legal line the authorities maintain a noncommittal attitude towards parents in which they are offered forms of support in their parental tasks.
School and parents relate in a different way. School has it own tasks and objectives and considers parents as important supporters to their work. School likes parents to be involved in school-activities, wants them to be allies, at school and at home.
Parents have a different view: they don't feel an urging obligation to further society as a whole or the school; they have their own assignments to themselves and to their children. They want to share in the prosperity our society has to offer them and they want their children to reach respectable positions in that society.
These contradictions in expectations and points of view of the partners in education make the relationship government, school and parents a complex one. Since the relationship is fairly free of obligations achievements are appreciated very differently.

Legislation is a very important governmental task; it defines the obligations according to which parents have to perform their parental duties and it states their rights. Besides that legal role, the authorities try to reach out to parents to support them in raising their children. Contrary to laws policies to make parents better performers in their educational behavior are not unambiguous and parents may well have other opinions than the authorities have.
They have a suspicion about government-involvement with their private lives. They shouldn't as many studies show hardly or no positive effects of the offer that is made to parents by the government.
Although parents think positive about their own capacities and use family-networks or friends for support, sometimes they call in help from others. Nursery school teachers, teachers and family doctors are the ones parents take in confidence about their uncertainties. In this indirect way authorities provide support to parents.

Government and communities have –due to all sorts of influences and for example the lack of results- produced many activities in a great and changing variety to support parents.
Policy-making by government bodies with respect to supporting parents in many cases resembles stumbling through woods in the night; you may find yourself on the right track. There is a bigger chance you may not.

Schools have to provide good education. Standards of content and quality are laid down in legislation and the Education Inspectorate and parents supervise the school. The educational participation act enables parents (and teachers) to have a say in schoolmatters. School, however, uses school participation councils to reach its own goals rather than empower parents. School expects parents to be allies, for its the child's future that is on stake and everything and everyone should be brought in position to reach for the best result the school can be held responsible for. School legitimizes its demands to parents by pointing out that certain educational behavior and an interest in schoolbusiness promote learning behavior and motivation of children. Alas, research shows it isn't easy to mention educational factors that function as well in the sphere of influence of the school and home as show a clear and lasting positive result on school success of children. In promoting parental involvement schools have to face the same problems as the government: due to lack of results standards of parental involvement that works are absent. So, the concept of 'parental involvement' stands for a multitude and variety of 'desired' parental activities.

Customergroups

As said, parents are very much aware about the choices they make in raising their children to successful citizens. Parents perform their own, chosen tasks and accept offers in support by government or school in case those offers conclude with their own objectives. Government and school are, in that respect, a marketplace on which parents act as customers with wishes and demands. Therefore government and schools should consider a few principles in developing activities for parents: parents are (loyal?) customers and like to be treated like to that, parents don't form a homogeneous group but can be divided in customergroups with different wishes.
At this moment in the Netherlands four different main customergroups of parents can be described:

- Parents who for various reasons don't need the offered services or activities provided by government or school. They are not prepared to fully show the parental involvement school asks of them. Neither are they prepared to adapt educational models or activities the government offers them. Figures show that only 30% of the parents use the opportunities for parental involvement at school and less than 5% are involved with educational activities offered by government or local authorities.
- There is a limited group of parents that like to use the existing educational offers frequently and are willing to make their own role as parents subservient or attune to the views of government and school. They are the eternal volunteers, always prepared to show up whenever the school asks them to. They are a valuable (and not always fully valued) partner of the school, often used as liaison officers between school and other parents.
- A third group of parents take their own values as basic assumption and only use educational services or activities when they tally in with their set of values. Value-driven choice of school by parents shows a considerable increase: a clear example are the Islamic schools in the Netherlands that are founded in the last few years.
- A last and growing group of parents are those that ask for a package of services that isn't directly related to the school careers of their children, but that is convenient or a substitute for their own tasks.

The need for such packages is shown by the growing group of parents that makes a choice for schools that can provide the wanted facilities as: a school timetable without the usual luncheon break so parents haven't to be at home, a staff that is suitably trained and stable, that can provide special care and prevents that children are sent home due to illnesses of teachers or shortage of staff (a nowadays common problem in Dutch schools), sufficient computers, a large and safe playground and after-school care, so parents don't have to bother about the safety and well-being of their children.

What offers should government and school focus on, given the changing demands of parents in the turbulent context of the contemporary society? We assume as a premise that:

- An educational offer to parents made by government is directed by the question how it *should* be.(From a legislational point of view the government is responsible for the content of the educational offer);
- How the offer *could* be depends on the questions parents ask.

Dialogues

Parents want to be asked about their wishes and they should be asked. The monologues of government and schools should be converted into dialogues where parents are valued partners. The much talked about model of educational partnership can only be achieved when communication between partners is improved. But why not discuss the model of shared responsibility and educational partnership when we know that a majority of parents isn't really interested in getting involved with schooltasks, but on the contrary asks the school to provide more services?

Why shouldn't schools use instruments derived from customer relationship management and make clear that both parents and school have their own tasks and are each responsible for their own part of the job? Parental involvement could thrive by those instruments that stimulate loyalty and continuity in the relationship between parents, pupils and school. Relationship-marketing is based on what customers want, in this case parents with their wishes, capacities and skills. An important part of the strategy is formed by the desired content of the relationship between school and parents. Does the schools want all parents to be their friends or do they settle for a few friends and a lot of acquaintances? What is the content or level of the bond between parents and school? Is it professional, emotional or structural? What ambitions do we cherish in developing parental involvement?

Whatever model is chosen, shared or divided responsibilities, parental involvement won't work and is in fact useless when the school fails in providing good education.

Because, let's face it, that is what parents want: good education for their children. Perhaps they want more, but surely not less!

Relationships between parents and school in the Czech Republic

Kateøina Emmerová & Milada Rabušicová

Significance of parents for school life and its development is nowadays generally acknowledged in the Czech Republic. Although this trend does not have as long a tradition as in most western European countries, it has achieved its position in contemplation about the quality of the school education and it has been keeping this position for a few past years.

In the field of changes and development of the educational system the second half of the 1990s in the Czech Republic is characterized more by attempts at the inner change of the school than by those at the structural change. As a matter of fact, all the initiatives of the school policy in the few past years aim at these inner changes or at least they mention this issue. The most prominent of the initiatives is the Appeal to 10 Million for the preparation of the National Programme of Development in Education from 1999-2000. The inner changes of school in cooperation with social partners are considerably paid attention to in the National Programme of Development of Education itself, which is also known as the White Book and which was worked out at the end of 2000 after a public discussion. One of the facts that comes out as virtually undoubtable, from the point of view of the principle of democratic decision-making and school management, is the call for the teacher involvement in the whole process of changes at school. Another point which is not doubted is the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of the general requirement of opening the process of changes from below. These principles include the idea of the teacher as the designer of the change. But what role is ascribed to parents? What is expected from them? In school documents and other various initiatives answers to such questions are not clear at all.

This is one of the reasons why we have started a three-year research project[1] under the name of The Role of Parents as Educational and Social Partners of the School.

Roles of parents

We are interested in parents and the roles they play in the Czech educational system, parents of children at the pre-primary, primary and lower secondary level of education in particular. We aim at parents as necessary designers of upbringing and education of their own children, although they partially delegate their role to school more or less compulsorily. We aim at parents who in the imaginary triangle of the relationships form another necessary apex apart from the child and the teacher. We aim at parents who with their opinions and attitudes, those unspoken and unexpressed as well, substantially influence the work of schools and school changes in general and form a potentially very strong political group.

From the analyses of the so far carried out studies on new conditions of the school development there is a fact coming out that there has not been taken enough complex interest in the role of parents in the educational process in the Czech republic in the 1990s. There are works that focus on the pupil from the point of view of their skills and personal development, there are works that are concerned with the teacher as the designer of

pedagogical changes, works that pay attention to the school management and to the inner and outer relationships of the school, but what is still missing is a work specific and complex at the same time that analyses the position of parents as educational and social partners of the school. However, the Annual Report of the Czech School Inspection for 1996 - 1997, for example, points out the building of the relationship between the school and the family and between the school and the public as one of the main problems of the contemporary school.

Despite all the facts mentioned above, we do not try to deal with this issue without any previous experience. We may partially take into account various studies that were in the past years concentrated, for example, on the parental preparedness to the child's entrance into school (K•iš•anová, K•ová•ková, 2001), on the dialogue between the family and the school (Janiš, 2001) or on various suggestions for the cooperation between the school and the family (Krej•ová, 2001). But primarily we draw from our own project Social Change and Education in the Czech Republic (Towards the Relationships between the School and the Family)[2] which was finished in 1995.

Relationships and communications

In this research we concentrated on the issue of relationships and communication between the school and the family. The starting premise was rooted in considering the communication barrier between these two parties which was caused by the lack of mutual trust and respect. During the research we concentrated on the mutual perception of the two parties engaged (how they perceive each other), on their expectations, their evaluation criteria (what criteria are involved in the parents' judgment of the school quality, what criteria are involved in the teachers' judgment of the parental care) and on their shared activities. In the conclusion we had to state that 'the quality of communication and co-operation between the school and parents was not very satisfactory', that 'the schools nowadays were in the phase of gradual opening and cautious search for the ways of approaching the parents of their pupils' and that 'there were attempts and partial initiatives from both sides but their effectiveness was to be doubted' (Rabušicová, Pol, 1996). The published results of the research were positively replied to by many pedagogues and they were also cited rather often. This fact justifies our idea that the pedagogical public considers this issue to be topical and necessary. This is also the reason why we would like to work on this issue further on and develop it.

The trend of changes in the Czech educational system, which began in the 1990s, continues. The topic of parents in relation to school is still an issue which is considered one of the headstones in building good educational environment for children. This is also the reason why we come back to this issue, from a different point of view, after six years again. This year we have started a three-year research project under the name of The Role of Parents as Educational and Social Partners of the School. Parents as *educational partners* of the school are defined as individuals and groups entering relationships with the school because they are interested in their children, their upbringing and education. Parents as *social partners* are defined as individuals and groups entering relationships with the school because they are interested in the development of the school as an institution.

The whole project was led by the attempt at understanding all potentialities, duties and rights of the parents as essential actors in the process of education of their own children in relation to the school. The goal is to contribute to the answers to questions connected with the role of parents as educational and social partners of the school. We are interested in the extend to which the real situation in the position of parents in relation to the school is compatible with various theoretical sources and in what activities may support and develop parents' position in schools. We are interested in the question to what extend the

actual situation of the position of parents in relation to the school corresponds to these and other theoretical sources. That is why we put the following questions:

1. What role is ascribed to parents by schools and how exactly is this role defined?
2. To what extend can we talk about the educational partnership and to what extend about the social partnership?
3. Are there any differences in defining the role of parents as educational and social partners in the kindergarten and at the first and at the second stage of the primary school?
4. What role do the parents ascribe to themselves in relation to school?
5. Are there any differences in the way in which their own role is defined in relation to school by parents of children in the kindergartens and at the first and at the second stage of the primary schools?
6. Are there any differences in attitudes of schools to parents and in attitudes of parents to schools in the country and in urban agglomerations? Can such attitudes enrich one another?
7. What, from the point of view of parental participation in the school education, can already existing projects focusing on developing the communication with parents and the public bring about to others?
8. Is it possible to think about school as a centre for lifelong learning of adults: parents and the general public?
9. Is it possible to think about school as a centre for supporting the good work of the family?
10. What chance is a parent as an individual given of putting through their ideas about education against the school? How and to what extend do individual parents use such chances?
11. What chance are parents as a group given of putting through their ideas about education against the school (and against other more powerful school institutions)? How and to what extend do parents use such chances?
12. To what extend are parents influenced in their attitudes to school by reflection of the contemporary school in the media?

The methodological frame of the project includes the processing of the existing theoretical framework about the role of parents in the educational system both from the Czech sources and from the abroad sources in particular.

Next there will be the observation and analysis of the contemporary situation concerning the role of parents in the educational process in the kindergartens and at the first and at the second stage of the primary schools. There will be used the whole set of methods of quantitative and qualitative research:

- Content analysis of the school legislature, school documents and the existing knowledge about the role of parents in the educational system in this country and in abroad (particularly in Britain, in the Scandinavian countries and in the Netherlands where is this issue rather traditional).
- Content analysis of the reflection of schools in the media taking the observed issue into account.
- Questionnaire survey of a representative sample of the Czech kindergartens and primary schools. Questionnaires will be given to parents and school managers (if need be to teachers). The questionnaires will also include the same batteries of questions which will enable the comparison of both views - pedagogical and parental - of the observed issue.
- Individual and group interviews (using the method of 'focus group' - asking questions and recording the discussion in a group) with parents and pedagogues, with members of the Union of Parents and also with members of other associations of parents.
- Case study of a selected school, if need be of more schools, taking the observed issue into account (the identification of schools will result from the preceding questionnaire survey).

Conclusion

During the first year we have been already managing the problem theoretically. We have based it on studying the relevant works published in the Czech Republic and in abroad. We have processed inspirational models of the parental role in the educational systems in selected countries. We try to get a wider - complex and contextual- view of the issue of parental partnership in relation to the school. This is the reason why we now concentrate on two areas which, in our point of view, help create this kind of context. It is the legislative framework that constitutes the basis for potentialities and ways of establishing and developing partnership and it is also the media framework that influences input ideas and expectations of parents who are to enter the relationships with the school.

We have analyzed the Czech legislature taking into account the parents' position which is ascribed to them in laws and other legal documents. If we take into consideration the exact content of the Czech legislature, we may divide it into two areas, namely educational partnership and social partnership. In the first case the partnership nearly overlaps with a 'customer attitude'. Only in the second case, that of the social partnership, there is possible support in the legislature, namely in the school boards. On the other hand, we know that the school boards are very rare. No matter whether we regard the parents as problems, customers or partners of the school, we may always find a certain inclination to one of these models in many legislative formulations. The parental partnership which we consider the desirable model may only be found in the *White Book*.

We have also analyzed selected media taking into account the various ways of presenting information about schools and the school system to the parents and the general public[3]. The media context is not favorable to the school issues, and the teachers in particular, at all. Issues connected with the school system and education are rare and their evaluation is mostly negative. The public, including the parents, has to find their way in the generally negative reflection so that it is not an obstacle for them in everyday communication with their school partners, which doesn't have to be easy.

Next year we are going to prepare and realize the questionnaire survey and process the results. After that we want to complete the obtained information by more sensitive qualitative methods in selected schools - individual and group interviews with parents and pedagogues. In the third year of working on the project we intend to realize case studies of selected schools and process the overall results of the project. Hopefully, we will be able to present results of our project at next ERNAPE conference and in such a way at least partially contribute to widening the range of knowledge about such an important point, which the parents in relation to the school certainly are, in the case of the Czech Republic in particular.

Notes

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Culture differences in education: implications for parental involvement and educational policies

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Parental involvement is one topic in an expanding list of components that research and practice suggested would improve schools and increase students' success (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). As a consequence, more and more, the importance of a fruitful co-operation between schools, the local community and the parents for children's development is emphasized (Smit, Moerel & Sleegers, 1999).
In the Handbook of the Sociology of Education 2000, Epstein and Sanders discuss a theory in which they state that three contexts - home, school, and community – act as overlapping spheres of influence on children. Parental involvement is seen as an important factor for stimulating a certain degree of congruence between school, home and community. Congruence between these three spheres of influence is said to be of importance for children's development (Laosa, 1988).

In this paper, we will focus on the relationship between parents and schools. We will address issues of culture differences between parents (especially minority parents) and implications of these differences for parents' educational attitudes, which may lead to different types of parental involvement.
As will be shown, current approaches of parental involvement contain some assumptions for parent-school relations. One of these assumptions is that parents and schools should act as partners in education. In this paper, we will question this assumption. Especially parents of minority students see school more as experts than as partners. We will argue that insight in parents' cultural background is needed for educational policies on parental involvement. First we will present Epstein's commonly used typology of parental involvement in order to present a frame of reference for discussing culture differences in education in the context of parental involvement.

Epstein's typology of parental involvement
The results of many studies and activities in schools, in districts, and in states contributed to the development of a framework of six major types of involvement that fall within the overlapping spheres of influence theory (cf. Epstein, 1992; 1995). Epstein (1992) has formulated a popular framework of six major types of involvement in a family/school partnership.

Type 1: *Basic Obligations of Families.* Families are responsible for providing for children's health and safety, developing parenting skills and child-rearing approaches that prepare children for school and that maintain healthy child development across grades, and building positive home conditions that support learning and behavior throughout the school years. Schools help families develop the knowledge and skills they need to understand their children at each grade level through workshops at the school or in other locations and in other forms of parent education, training, and information giving.

Type 2: *Basic Obligations of Schools.* The schools are responsible for communicating with

families about school programs and children's progress. Communications include the notices, phone calls, visits, report cards, and conferences with parents that most schools provide. Other innovative communications include information to help families choose or change schools and to help families help students select curricula, courses, special programs and activities, and other opportunities at each grade level. Schools vary in the forms and frequency of communications and greatly affect whether the information sent home can be understood by all families. Schools strengthen partnerships by encouraging two-way communication.

Type 3: *Involvement at School*. Parents and other volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children are involved in classrooms or in other areas of the school, as are families who come to school to support student performances, sports, or other events. Schools improve and vary schedules so that more families are able to participate as volunteers and as audiences. Schools recruit and train volunteers so that they are helpful to teachers, students, and school improvement efforts at school and in other locations.

Type 4: *Involvement in Learning Activities at Home*. Teachers request and guide parents to monitor and assist their own children at home. Teachers assist parents in how to interact with their children at home on learning activities that are coordinated with the children's classwork or that advance or enrich learning. Schools enable families to understand how to help their children at home by providing information on academic and other skills required of students to pass each grade, with directions on how to monitor, discuss, and help with homework and practice and reinforce needed skills.

Type 5: *Involvement in Decision Making, Governance, and Advocacy*. Parents and others in the community serve in participator roles in the PTA/PTO, Advisory Councils, Chapter 1 programs, school site management teams, or other committees or school groups. Parents also may become activists in independent advocacy groups in the community. Schools assist by training parents to be leaders and representatives in decision-making skills and how to communicate with all parents they represent, by including parents as true, not token, contributors to school decisions and by providing information to community advocacy groups so that they may knowledgeably address issues of school improvement.

Type 6: *Collaboration with Community Organizations*. Schools collaborate with agencies, businesses, cultural organizations, and other groups to share responsibility for children's education and future success. Collaboration includes school programs that provide or coordinate children's and families' access to community and support services, such as before- and after-school care, health services, cultural events, and other programs. Schools vary in how much they know about and draw on community resources to enhance and enrich the curriculum and other student experiences. Schools assist families with information on community resources that can help strengthen home conditions and assist children's learning and development.

Four of the six Epstein categories are things that the families do, or are responsible for, either at home or at school. The two 'at home' types (Types 1 and 4) concentrate on the child's basic needs, creation of a positive environment, parent-initiated learning activities and child-initiated requests for help. Types 3 and 5, 'Support for School Programs and Activities' and 'Decision Making, Governance, and Advocacy' are the two 'at-school' categories. Type 2, 'The Basic Obligations of Schools,' is one of two school roles, and this type deals primarily with communications. The other school role, 'Collaborations and Exchanges with the Community,' refers to the partnership between

the school and the community. Despite a varying degree of role division concerning certain types of involvement (family, community or schools), a strong notion of congruency between these three spheres is assumed for optimal parental involvement. Furthermore, it is often assumed that parental involvement can improve school and students' learning, when parents and schools act effectively as partners in education. So, improving the nature and quality of the relationship between parents and schools is often considered an important factor to improve schools as well as children's development. This assumption implies that parents are willing to become partners in education and get involved in schools.

Sociocultural differences in parental involvement

Research shows that parents from lower classes and from ethnic minorities tend to be less involved in their child's education (Lopez 2001; Chavkin, 1993). As a headteacher of a school with almost 100% ethnic minority pupils put it: 'This is an integral part of these parents' culture where there is a strict division between responsibilities: the family is the responsibility of the parents, the school of the teachers, and the street of the police' (Driessen & Valkenberg, 2000). This is, of course, a very generalistic view.

In a large-scale study by Driessen (2002) nearly 9000 parents of children at more than 600 Dutch schools answered a number of questions regarding their involvement. In Table 1 the answers are presented broken down by ethnic group. In the Netherlands some 15% of the pupils in primary education are of foreign descent. In the big cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague and Utrecht, however, more than half of the pupils are ethnic minorities, mainly Turks, Surinamese, Moroccans and Antilleans. The questions refer to Basic Obligations of Schools (Type 2) and Involvement in Learning Activities at Home (Type 4) as types of parental involvement.

Table 1 - Differences in parental involvement by ethnic group (in %)

	ethnic group						
	Dutch	Surinamese/ Antillean	Turkish	Moroccan	total	*Eta*	*p*
% frequently help with homework from mother	50	51	23	15	37	.33	.000
% frequently help with homework from father	22	31	27	11	22	.17	.009
% always attend parent meetings	73	67	50	49	60	.21	.000
% talk with teacher more than twice a year	26	38	42	31	34	.13	.001
% talk about school every day	82	74	51	51	66	.29	.000
% long schooling important	29	63	62	68	55	.31	.000
% school-appropriate behavior important	35	66	73	74	62	.33	.000

The table shows considerable differences among the four groups. With regard to helping the children with their homework, this is much more often done by Dutch parents than by minority parents. The percentage Turkish and Moroccan parents who always attend parental meetings is

much lower than the percentages for the Dutch and Surinamese or Antillean parents. With respect to contact with the teacher, the differences among the four ethnic groups are rather small. With respect to talking about school, however, differences are again observed. This occurs considerably less in the Turkish and Moroccan families than in the other families. The findings with regard to the importance attached to attending school as long as possible are quite noteworthy: While the three minority groups virtually do not differ in this respect, the Dutch parents score particularly low. Also with regard to the importance attached by parents to school-appropriate behavior ('conformity'), no great differences were observed among the three minority groups: They all consider school-appropriate behavior to be quite important. Dutch parents, in contrast, attach considerably less importance to such behavior.

A number of reasons can be given for these differences. First of all, many of the Turkish and Moroccan parents have little or no education. Most of them came from rural areas where there often were no schools or schooling was not considered to be important. In some instances schooling was seen as something which was imposed by the central government and therefore was viewed with distrust. In addition, given their occupations (mostly small farmers), schooling was not seen as a means of social mobility (Coenen, 2001). For many of them this changed after they had migrated to the Netherlands and got low-paid jobs and had to perform dirty and unskilled work. Minority parents wanted their children to have a better life than they had. They all wanted them to become doctors and lawyers and schooling was seen as a way to fulfill this dream (Ledoux, Deckers, De Bruijn & Voncken, 1992). There are, however a number of obstacles which make it for most of them truly an unrealistic dream. In addition to the fact that these parents had little or no education, they also have little or no mastery of the Dutch language (Driessen & Jungbluth, 1994). Both facts signify a considerable problem if they want to help their children. Therefore, the most many minority parents can do is stimulate their children in a general sense. This explains the differences regarding the concrete help with homework. This also explains the differences in attending parent meetings: many Turkish and Moroccan parents are hardly able to understand what is being discussed at such meetings. The fact that Turkish parents more often talk with teachers probably can be seen as a reaction to problems their children have at school: Turkish pupils just have more learning and behavioral problems. In Turkish and Moroccan families school is a topic that parents talk about considerably less than in Dutch families. On the other hand, many more of them think long schooling is very important. The problem probably is that they have high expectations of schooling, but are not acquainted with the Dutch education system, lack the necessary information and social networks to reach their goals (Ledoux, Deckers, De Bruijn & Voncken, 1992). The last item in Table 1 gives an indication of cultural differences in child rearing practices in the family and at school. The percentages make it clear that especially Turkish and Moroccan parents attach great value to school-appropriate behavior, which stands for 'conformity'. Dutch parents, on the other hand, are more oriented towards autonomy and self-realization based on egalitarian principles (Pels, 2000). These principles are also the guidelines of the Dutch education system. For many minority parents these discrepancies between their family and school pedagogics signify a serious dilemma (cf. Ogbu's oppositional culture; Ogbu, 1994).

So, one important reason to not get involved with schools, is the fact that parents' educational attitudes differ from the current pedagogical norms and values in Dutch schools. Apparently, parents and schools differ with respect to their educational attitudes. In western societies, education policies nowadays enhance a strong student-centered approach. The emphasis on discipline and academic performance is lessened

in favor of emphasis on self-directed learning and personal and social development in education (Chandler, 1999; Pels, 2000).
In order to gain more insight in the degree of congruency between family and school as spheres of influence, insight in educational attitudes of parents can be helpful. Moreover, attitudes towards education incorporate conceptions of types of parental involvement. As Epstein suggests, families and schools should act as partners in education. This partnership could be at risk when parents differ with respect to their educational attitudes. In the following section we will address differences between parents' educational attitudes and implications of these differences in educational attitudes for parental involvement.

Attitudes towards education

The most common distinction encountered in research and theory on educational attitudes is the distinction between *content-centered* versus *student-centered* attitudes (Denessen, 1999). Content-centered attitudes emphasize the preparation of students for a career in society, discipline and order within the classroom and the school, the core subjects, achievement, and the attainment of the highest diploma possible. The accent is thus on the *product* of education. Student-centered attitudes emphasize the formative task of the school, active participation of students within the classroom and the school, the social and creative subjects, and both independent and cooperative learning. The accent is thus on the educational *process* (see Table 2).

Table 2 - The content and structural distribution of attitudes towards education

Content domain	Content-centered attitudes	Student-centered attitudes
Educational goals	Career-development	Personal and social development
Pedagogical relation	Discipline	Involvement
Instructional emphasis	Product	Process

The attitudes towards education involving three different domains of content can thus be further described in terms of two dimensions: content-centered attitudes and student-centered attitudes. Research has shown that the higher parents' social class or level of education is, the less content-centered parents tend to be (Denessen, 1999). Especially with regard to content-centered attitudes, differences between groups exist. Van den Broek (2000) found the following differences with respect to content-centered attitudes of parents from three socioethnic groups (Table 3).

Table 3 - Content-centered attitudes of parents. Mean scores of three socioethnic groups (scales range from 1 to 5)

	Dutch Middle class N=158	Dutch Lower class N=287	Ethnic minorities N=27	Eta^2
Career-development	3.51	3.78	4.28	.07*
Discipline	3.85	4.11	4.39	.10*
Product	3.17	3.43	4.08	.12*

* $p<.01$

In Table 3 it is shown that minority parents are more content-centered than middle-class parents. These findings are consistent with other research on parents' educational attitudes:
'Delpit (1986) reported that when she was a new teacher, she tried to structure her classroom to be consistent with middle-class notions that reading is a fun, interactive process. However, her African American students did not progress, and she was criticized by their parents, who wanted their children to learn skills. As she became what she called more 'traditional' in her approach, the African American youngsters progressed.' (Sonnenschein, Brody & Munsterman, 1996, p.13).

To interpret these differences in educational attitudes in terms of implications for parental involvement, Hofstede's theory of culture differences can be helpful (Hofstede, 1986; 1991). In his research he elaborated on the effects of culture differences on educational attitudes and the relationship between parents and schools.

Understanding parent-school relationships: Hofstede's theory of culture differences
Hofstede sees culture as the personal development of the members of a society, as a mental programming:
'The sources of one's mental programs lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences. The programming starts within the family; it continues within the neighborhood, at school, in youth groups, at the work place, and in the living community' (Hofstede, 1991, p.4). A more customary term for Hofstede's concept 'mental program' is: culture. 'Culture is a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived in the same environment, which is where it was learned. It is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another' (Hofstede, 1991, p.5).

He developed a four-dimensional model of national culture differences, on the basis of a large body of survey data about values of people in over 50 countries around the world. These people worked in the local subsidiaries of a large multinational corporation: IBM. They represented almost perfectly matched samples because they were similar in all respects except nationality. From country to country, differing answers were found on questions about relations to authority, the relationship between the individual and society, the individuals' concept of masculinity and femininity and his or her ways of dealing with conflicts. The labels chosen for the dimensions of the model are as follows:
1. Power distance
2. Individualism versus Collectivism
3. Masculinity versus Femininity
4. Uncertainty avoidance.

Based on the answers on several questions, Hofstede created an index score for each of the four dimensions. In Table 4 we show the power distance index (PDI), the individualism index (IDV), masculinity index (MAS) and the uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) of a selection of 8 (groups of) countries of Hofstede's study. This selection was made out of the 50 countries of Hofstede's research in order to give a clear picture of the differences in various countries.

We will first explain the meanings of these indeces:
1. PDI-scores inform us about *dependence* relationships in a country. In small power distance countries there is limited dependence of subordinates on bosses, and a preference for consultation. The emotional distance between them is relatively small. In large power distance countries there is a considerable dependence of subordinates on bosses. The higher the score, the bigger the power distance in that country

2. IDV-scores say something about the extent of integration into strong cohesive groups (collectivism) or the extent to which people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family (individualism). The higher the score, the higher is the rate of individualism in this country.
3. MAS-scores inform us about masculinity/femininity in a country. The higher the score on masculinity the stronger social gender roles will be distinct (i.e. men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life). A lower score on masculinity means that a country is more feminine, which pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap (i.e., both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life).
4. UAI- scores say something about the uncertainty avoidance rate in a country. The higher the score on UAI, the more members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.

Table 4 - Power distance, masculinity, individualism and uncertainty avoidance scores in 8 (groups of) countries (Hofstede, 1991)

	Power distance (PDI)	Individualism (IDV)	Masculinity (MAS)	Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)
USA	40	91	62	46
Sweden	31	71	5	29
Great Britain	35	89	66	35
The Netherlands	38	80	14	53
Italy	50	76	70	75
Spain	57	51	42	86
Turkey	66	37	45	85
Arab countries	80	38	53	68

Lowest scores: PDI: 11, IDV: 6, MAS: 5, UAI: 8. Highest scores: PDI:104, MAS: 95, IDV:91, UAI: 112.

Hofstede's research shows that western countries can be characterized by a lower degree of power distance, and a higher degree of individualism. With respect to masculinity and uncertainty avoidance, differences are not that clear. Hofstede also found culture differences *within* western countries: power-distance scores of lower social class-cultures tend to be higher than scores of higher social class-cultures. The opposite holds for individualism scores: individualism scores of lower social classes tend to be lower than individualism scores of higher social classes.

Culture differences between countries are also reflected by differences in education. Hofstede formulated educational aspects that are linked to the above mentioned four dimensions of culture. In tables 5 and 6, we will focus on Hofstede's suggested differences in educational attitudes related to differences in power distance and individualism versus collectivism.

Table 5 - Differences in teacher/student and student/student interaction related to the power distance dimension (Hofstede, 1986)

Small power distance societies	Large power distance societies
• Stress on impersonal 'truth' which can in principal be obtained from any competent person	• Stress on personal 'wisdom' which is transferred in the relationship with a particular teacher (guru)
• A teacher should respect the independence of his/her students	• A teacher merits the respect of his/her students
• Student-centered education (premium on initiative)	• Teacher-centered-education (premium on order)
• Teacher expects students to initiate communication	• Students expect teacher to initiate communication
• Teacher expects students to find their own paths	• Students expect teacher to outline paths to follow
• Students may speak up spontaneously in class	• Students speak up in class only when invited by the teacher
• Students allowed to contradict or criticize teacher	• Teacher is never contradicted nor publicly criticized
• Effectiveness on learning related to amount of two-way communication in class	• Effectiveness of learning related to excellence of the teacher
• Outside class, teachers are treated as equals	• Respect for teachers is also shown outside class
• In teacher/student conflicts, parent are expected to side with the student	• In teacher/student conflicts, parents are expected to side with the teacher
• Younger teachers are more liked than older teachers	• Older teachers are more respected than younger teachers

Table 6 - Differences in teacher/student and student/student interaction related to the individualism versus collectivism dimension (Hofstede, 1986)

Collectivist societies	Individualist societies
• Positive association in society with whatever is rooted in tradition	• Positive association in society with whatever is ' new'
• The young should learn; adults cannot accept student role	• One is never too old to learn; 'permanent education'
• Students expect to learn how to do	• Students expect to learn how to learn
• Individual students will only speak up in small groups	• Individual students will speak up in class in response to a general invitation by the teacher
• Large classes split socially into smaller cohesive subgroups based on particularistic criteria (e.g. ethnic affiliation)	• Subgroupings in class vary from one situation to the next based on universalistic criteria (e.g. the task 'at hand')
• Formal harmony in learning situations should be maintained at all times (T-groups are taboo)	• Confrontation in learning situations can be salutary; conflicts can be brought into the open
• Neither the teacher nor any student should ever be made to lose face	• Face-consciousness is weak
• Education is a way of gaining prestige in one's social environment and of joining a higher status group	• Education is a way of improving one's economic worth and self-respect based on ability and competence
• Diploma certificates are important and displayed on walls	• Diploma certificates have little symbolic value
• Acquiring certificates, even through illegal means (cheating, corruption) is more important than acquiring competence	• Acquiring competence is more important than acquiring certificates
• Teachers are expected to give preferential treatment to some students (e.g. based on ethnic affiliation or on recommendation by an influential person	• Teacher are expected to be strictly impartial

Referring to the results that minority parents have relatively strong content-centered attitudes and the fact that these parents can be characterized by a relatively high degree of power distance and collectivism, we can draw the preliminary conclusion that Epstein's notion of partnership between parents and schools can be endangered by existing culture differences. Minority parents are likely to see teachers more as experts than as partners. Their distance to school is rather high, compared to middle class parents, who tend to be less content-centered and to experience a lesser degree of power distance and collectivism.

These culture differences in education should be considered in discussions on parental involvement.

Discussion: implications for schools and parents

Research on parental involvement suggests that parents of lower social classes and ethnic minority parents seem less involved than middle class parents.
In this paper, we focussed on culture difference that can be held accountable for these findings. 'Low involved parents' can typically being characterized by a more traditional culture in which role-divisions are quite clear: parents are responsibility at home, teachers are responsible at school. These parents view teachers as experts in education at school. This expert-idea is not consistent with a partnership-view of a parent-school community. This partnership-view is especially apt for middle-class parents, who indeed often see teachers as partners in education.

Sonnenschein, Brody and Munsterman (1996, p. 18) state that 'Teachers need to understand the cultural bases of different child-rearing practices. They also need to understand that parents' practices may well reflect their explicit or implicit beliefs about child development. Although this is a fairly new area of research inquiry, the limited evidence to date indicates that parents from different sociocultural groups have different notions about how their children learn and what their children should learn. Thus, researchers and teachers alike must strive to understand these beliefs and practices.' From such an understanding we can offer suggestions for parents' involvement, and we can tailor school experiences to better reflect the diverse strengths and interests of the entering children.

When minority parents indeed are more traditional than middle class and upper class parents, schools might focus on their specific cultural needs in order to bridge the gap between schools and families. Mutual understanding and accepting different cultures is a prerequisite for successful parental involvement in schools. In a report on parental involvement of minority parents in the city of Utrecht (the Netherlands), the Multicultural Institute Utrecht suggested schools to:

- better listen to minority parents and try to develop an understanding for their specific needs;
- develop a strong emphasis on content-centered education;
- revalue a cognitive teaching approach (Multicultural Institute Utrecht, 2001).

Bridging the gap between schools and families does not imply a change of parent-behavior, as often stated (e.g. Lopez, 2001), but might also imply changing schools' policies on parental involvement. As many authors suggest, stronger effort to realize two-way communication (Epstein's Type 2 involvement) is needed for a fruitful parent-school relationship. Instead of trying to search for creative ways to get marginalized parents involved in specific/pre-determined ways, schools should begin the process of identifying ways to capitalize on how parents are already involved in their children's educational lives. Schools must make a positive effort to recognize and validate the culture of the home in order to build better collaborative relationships with parents.

In this paper, we have tried to make a first contribution in a rather unexplored field. We hope we will stimulate and inspire other researchers. The results of future research can foster our understanding of the beliefs and practices of parents from different sociocultural backgrounds.

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The parental need for pluralistic primary education in the Netherlands

Jacques F.A. Braster

Introduction

According to the Dutch Primary Education Act all primary schools in the Netherlands, both public and private, should take in consideration that children are growing up in a multicultural society. Within these boundaries private schools, that like public schools are completely financed by the State, are free to choose their educational goals. The goals that public schools should achieve, however, are also specified in the Primary Education Act. Public schools are supposed to pay active attention to the diversity of values in society. Furthermore public schools are accessible to all children of all social backgrounds and they are governed by public authorities or more specifically by the Dutch municipalities. In a society that in the last decades has become more pluralistic, especially because of the influx of migrants from the former Dutch colonies, labor migration and people trying to get asylum, one would expect that the public schools are the dominant part of the educational system. It is not. At the moment two out of three schools are private and based on religious principles.

Parental needs

What do parents want? What is their need for schools that pay attention to the diversity of society? This, and many other questions, are subject of a research that is done in a big city in the south of the Netherlands. In this city about 1.200 parents with children in the age group from 0 through 12 years old have filled in a questionnaire. On the basis of this data we will try to answer the following questions:

- What is the parental need for attention with respect to the plurality of society?
- What is the actual attention that schools pay to this plurality?
- Are there in this respect differences between public and private-denominational schools?
- Can the parental need for plurality in primary education be explained by their pedagogical values (conformity versus self-reliance, and tolerance) and their social background (education, ethnicity, and religion)?

Answers

The answers are summarized in five tables. Table 1 shows that the items, that are supposed to measure the parental need for attention with respect to the plurality of society, can be divided into three groups:

- Attention for social issues or social problems (factor 1);
- Attention for religious diversity (factor 2);
- Attention for ethnic diversity (factor 3).

Table 2 shows that parents especially want attention for ethnic and social issues. Religious matters are considered to be less important, which reflects the trend towards secularization, even in the predominantly Catholic southern part of the Netherlands. Table 2 also shows that the strong parental need for plurality is not completely fulfilled by the schools.

Table 3 shows that the public school system pays significantly more attention to ethnic diversity than the Catholic school system. According to parents social problems are also more discussed

in public schools than in the Catholic ones, while no differences can be found between the two systems with respect to attention for religious diversity.

Looking at the social composition of schools we must note that there are no differences with respect to ethnicity (table 4). However, there are religious differences. Non-religious parents appear to choose public schools and Catholic parents prefer Catholic schools. But the differences are not as big as they used to be in the past. Furthermore, it must be noted to public schools are acceptable for quite a lot of parents that consider themselves to be a member of a religious group. Finally, it must be mentioned that parents with children on public schools have higher levels of education than one would expect for a school that is accessible to all social groups. This can be explained by pointing to the minority position of public schools in the mainly Catholic south.

The last table we will comment is table 5, in which the parental need for attention paid to plurality is explained by social background and pedagogical values. The last concept is coined by sociologist Melvin Kohn. It is measured by way of a principal component analysis in which two factors were detected. One dimension represented the classic difference between conformity and self-reliance, the other one could be named in terms of the stress parents put on tolerance as pedagogical value. The table shows that self-reliance as a pedagogical value is (as expected) positively related with not belong to a religion and having obtained a high educational level. Tolerance, however, is not related with these parental background variables. Non-indigenous groups appear to put less stress on tolerance as a pedagogical value than the dominant indigenous group.

Table 5 also makes clear that the parental need for attention with respect to social problems, religious diversity and ethnic diversity must be explained by different configurations of factors. The need to speak in a primary school about concrete social problems, for instance, is a matter that seems important for the dominant indigenous group and for parents with a lower educational level. On the other side is the need for attention with respect to ethnic diversity a matter that seems to be of relevance for non-religious, higher educated and non-indigenous parents. The attention for ethnic diversity is also positively related with both sets of pedagogical values. However, the explained variance for the attention paid to plurality in primary education remains rather low.

The analyses above raises the question to what extent schools must follow the demand of parents for a pluralistic education. It also raises the question if the stress should be on the transfer of knowledge about societal diversity or the transmission of values?

Table 1 - Factor analysis of attention for plurality in primary education (extraction: generalized least squares; rotation: varimax; factor loadings > .30)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Alcohol and drugs	.757		
Criminality and violence in the Netherlands	.646		
Abortion, euthanasia and suicide	.581		
Sexuality	.484		
Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc.		.809	
Differences between Western religions		.791	
Discrimination and racism			.697
Problems of the Third World			.560
Multicultural society in the Netherlands			.514
Cronbachs alpha	.72	.81	.66

Table 2 - The attention for plurality in primary education: the need for attention and the actual attention in primary school as perceived by parents: mean scores (scale values: 0 - 10)

	Need for attention (N = 1153)	Actual attention in schools (N = 699)
Social problems	7,7	5,4
Religious diversity	5,8	5,0
Ethnic diversity	7,9	6,1

Table 3 - The actual attention for plurality in public and catholic schools: mean scores (scale values: 0-10)

	Public schools (N = 126)	Catholic schools (N = 552)	Significance F-ratio
Social problems	5.6	5.3	.041
Religious diversity	5.1	5.0	.318
Ethnic diversity	6.6	6.0	.000

Table 4 - The social background of parents that have actually chosen for public and catholic schools (percentages)

	Public schools (N = 153)	Catholic schools (N = 518)	Significance Chi-square
Non-indigenous	11%	10%	.455
Non-religious	40%	19%	.000
Third level education	57%	43%	.009

Table 5 - Regression analysis of social background of the family, parental values and the need for attention for plurality in primary education (beta coefficients; p < .05)

	Parental value: Self-reliance	Parental value: Tolerance	Attention for social problems	Attention for religious diversity	Attention for ethnic diversity
Non-religious	**.162**	-.030	-.007	-.042	**.109**
Non-indigenous	.003	**-.102**	**-.073**	**.130**	**.063**
Education level	**.397**	-.029	**-.189**	**.091**	**.071**
Self-reliance			-.037	**.066**	**.096**
Tolerance			.020	.023	**.075**
R-squared	.21	.01	.05	.03	.05

Have minority parents a say in Dutch educational opportunity policies?

Paul Jungbluth

Netherlands' equal opportunity policies: the historical shift in target groups

Over the last quarter of a century the target groups of equal opportunity policies in the Netherlands dramatically changed. Whereas initially the concept of working class children was generally accepted as the best identifier for pupils with low educational opportunities, today mainly ethnic concepts determine who is targeted and receives extra budget.

In the social-democrat tradition of educational equality policies during the seventies about 30 percent of the white population were then perceived having poor educational opportunities as compared to national average. Parental social class was the only, generally accepted clue to identify targeted 'underprivileged' pupils, with low parental educational level as an easy indicator of lower class identity. A general practice not to mix up with the kind of policies meant for pupils at risk who suffer from learning disabilities (and who were far less in numbers and who were addressed by other educational policies). No, regardless of actual performance and only based on figures about the correlation between class and opportunity, about 30 percent of the population were granted extra school facilities in these so called 'educational priority policies'. The formula to grant schools under this priority policy was easy and convincing: given that a simple system of counting pupils normally is used to administer the main school budgets, a revaluation of working class children in that counting system up to 1.25 instead of 1 resulted in relatively larger budgets for working class schools. In turn the relative upgrading of budgets for working class schools resulted automatically in a more favourable pupil-teacher ratio at these schools as compared to normal.

As throughout the seventies and eighties the proportion of non-white working class children rose, those pupils were in turn revalued in a parallel way: instead of 1 they were counted for 1.9, resulting in even smaller classes in what were then called 'black schools'. In just a few decades traditional working class areas in major Netherlands'cities changed in colour, with Moroccan and Turkish pupils or South-American pupils dominating in former working class schools. The relative homogeneity in terms of social class of these ethnic minorities (outnumbering in certain city areas the 'indigenous' white population) resulted in a new perspective on social inequality with ethnicity pushing aside class as the perceived basic category behind social inequality. The serious accumulation of problems for non-white working class children resulted in a growing neglect of the types of disadvantages white working class were suffering under. Instead of powerlessness and poverty the lack of Netherlands' mother tongue seemed to become the perceived factor behind poor opportunities. Today first signs of a reconsideration about who is to be facilitated and to what extent come up; even school inspectors appear to explicitly advocate a reshuffling of educational policy budgets, somewhat more to the benefit of white working class categories.

Against this background one can easily understand that traditional public advocates of

working class' interests like social democrat parties and trade unions no longer automatically were perceived as the political representatives of the target groups in equal educational opportunity policies. As a matter of fact it became rare to find any identifiable institution or organization advocating interests of white working class categories in the field of education for more than two decades, or even for any working class category at all regardless of colour. So what about the coloured working class pupils: who became their advocates in a situation where enormous budgets (up to one billion a year) were spent in educational policies fighting for mainly their equal opportunities? That is the key question in this paper.

Netherlands' equal opportunity policies: major shifts in political administration

Before going into the above posed questions, let us focus on major administrative characteristics of the educational priority policies. The political administration in Netherlands' education is rather complex. Although all schools are financed equally on state budgets, only state schools fall under direct responsibility of local city boards. Catholic, protestant and other 'pillars in education' rule their own schools in relative autonomy, be it apart from major finances. And, different from what many would expect: all pillars almost equally serve a complete pallet of social and ethnic groups, so all are equally involved in priority policies, which count relatively high on the main political agendas. One might say that especially in relation to the implications of priority policies the accepted structure of pillarization becomes critical in a number of ways.

Ever since the start of Dutch priority policies in education, the national parliament had a direct line and responsibility in these policies. This can simply be illustrated by the fact that the law underlying this policy implied a yearly report on the evaluation of effects to be presented to the members of parliament. In other words: the matter of equal opportunities in education was a direct concern of the national parliament whereas in most other fields of educational policies most schools are highly autonomous. Dutch tradition speaks of freedom of education with respect to what schools actually do.

For almost two decades this problematic structure resulted in repetitive discussions about the apparent ineffectiveness of the priority policies: there was little to evaluate as positive, but then there was little to take influence on, given the traditional freedom of education especially in non-state schools.

Two possibly opposing modernization formulas in public policies were than equally embraced: deregulation and decentralization on the one hand and public effect accountancy on the other. Of course for political reasons they were presented as complementary against all logic and experiences. The result is now that the national parliament plays no longer a clear role with regard to educational priority policies, whereas local city boards are encouraged and even more than that to demand all school boards within their reach, to come to a local agreement about how to spend the priority budgets, how to evaluate ongoing programs and how to handle possible negative effects. At city level the pillarized school structure now gets under stress as local boards are supposed to take control of the ways schools operationalize their contributions in priority policies.

Minority parents and civic society

As described above, today minority pupils constitute the major category in terms of budget and in terms of public interest when it comes tot equal opportunity policies. Together with that, the administrative focus of such policies has descended from national level to that of city boards who find themselves obliged by law to negotiate with a majority of regional autonomous school boards in what is called 'accordance oriented consultation' about the actual variants of priority policies to choose: without accordance, no more budget says the official penalty

Now a third factor completes the situation we are here focussing on: exactly at city level where decisions should be made on how to actually design equal opportunity policies, most minority parents, often not in the possession of Netherlands nationality and so having to do without a right to vote at national level, are allowed to vote for city councils! At city level – different form national - they have complete civil rights.

A number of drastic political and educational changes might occur as a consequence of this remarkable crossing of different developments: minority pupils becoming the major target group in terms of educational priority budgets, city boards in turn getting key roles in educational administration against a tradition of 'educational freedom' and minority parents allowed right to vote for city boards. One of these changes, too vague yet to clearly comment on, is that in most local situations the equilibrium underlying the Netherlands pillar structure in education (between state schools versus a number of religiously defined autonomous school boarding unions) might be lacking; in most local situations the mosaic of pillorized schools differs sweepingly from the national proportions. What has been handled at national level with prudency and reservation, might become a clear object of opposite interests at local level. Whose schools will serve the different target groups of equal opportunity policies, who will receive what parts of the budget, who determines criteria for effect evaluation, what to do with critical reports? How to handle the ultimate rule of penalties: no more budget for ineffective policies? And next to that: who decides on the actual composition of school boards? Should they reflect the social and ethnic composition as enrolled in the schools under their administration? Who represents the targeted groups if not the boards in question?

And apart from the possible shifts in local balances of power amongst different school boards, the new decision structure around educational priority policies finally come together in the city councils in which most minorities are poorly represented so far. A situation that could easily change, once it becomes clear that educational opportunities of coloured working class children, at local level often outnumbering all others, are at steak.

New rules of the game for minority parents?

Throughout the existence of equal opportunity policies in the Netherlands an everlasting discussion unfolds about who is to blame for inequality. Is it simply a matter of unequal opportunities schools offer to pupils with different social and ethnic backgrounds? Or – equally simple - are parents from certain social and ethnic background to blame for not offering their children a rich and adequate developmental environment, as a necessary precondition for schools to assure success to their children? Programs for intervention in families stimulating mothers to handle their children more adequate, reduction of allowances in case of parents not attending Dutch language courses, all these reflect the existing power relations between education and minority parents. In some cases even contracts are made up in which parents should make promises about their effort to boost school performance of their children with schools threatening to stop their extra programs if otherwise. Little or no examples illustrate an opposite form of taking influence: minority parents defining their demands towards schools, although that would reflect the idea behind basic educational concepts of (white) parental responsibility and power.

Although the described new conditions still are to fresh to foretell definite new balances of power, it is clear that the political and juridical implications of a number of measures coming together in the new city governed variant of educational priority policies may arouse a number of crucial developments. So far minority parents are poorly organized in terms of taking political influence. On the other hand they clearly overtake the Dutch working class parents in terms of motivation for their children's school success. Their expectations towards educational opportunities for their

children is by far not as sceptical as that of traditional target categories for educational priority policies.
Up till now the civic servants who in fact rule at city level the newly conceived local priority programs have done so in a way one can hardly criticise in this respect: evening meetings have been organized around towns to let minority parents have a say. In most cases they were poorly frequented. Advisory school councils, partly representing parents, could allow minority parents to take influence and here and there they do so indeed.
But all this stands in sharp contrast to what seems logic. If city councils want to handle educational priority policies seriously and effectively, they have to base those policies on a system of local monitoring: monitoring not just of learning effects and school careers but also in terms of social and ethnic segregation, of budget allocation and so on. And such a system of monitoring has to differentiate for different target groups, different town districs and ultimately schools. The way other but parallel decision procedures in local administration use to take is such that it will allow minority parents far more than up till now to oversee the implications of what happens to their children and grab hold of the national budgets allowed to further their children's education. Question is not, whether they could translate their than made up opinions into political power and decisions, question is whether such information will reach them in a proper way and whether they will have opportunities to politically organize themselves and in turn their white companions in deprivation.
One of the tasks at hand for researchers in the field of educational policies is to develop strategies and formulas for informative feedback that is both meaningful and will really reach the different target groups of educational opportunity policies and supply them with necessary information to conquer their authorized position as a direct interest group towards a school system holding up too often a false ideology of equal opportunities.

Full report on 'How to empower minority parents in educational priority policies' only available in Dutch language.

To see together. Visualization of meaning structures in interaction processes between children and adults in Finland

Raili Kärkkäinen

Introduction

At the 29th NFPF Congress in Stockholm in March 2001 educators agreed in the group of home and school co-operation that parental involvement is crucial to children's learning and education (see also Bridge 2001, Henry 1996, Korpinen 1991, Ribom 1993, Crozier 2000) and new, contextual and democratic methods are valuable and needed. Home and school co-operation has not traditionally taken place in real learning situations but has mainly dealt with information about arrangements of everyday life and varied in different schools and contexts.

Parental and grandparental involvement in two small school contexts are examined in this paper. The first is an elementary school context with three teachers and three grades in Saarenmaa and the second is a pre-school context in the community of Konnevesi with about 3000 inhabitants. The aim of these interactional case studies is to implement strategies that enable parents and grandparents to be more involved in their children's learning and provide a setting for hermeneutical processes of understanding (see e.g. Habermas 1967) both in home contexts and in school. The purpose of the research is to provide a model for co-operation and to improve practices in school.

Parental Involvement in School Learning

The primary learning context for the child is the home context and parents with close relatives as the first educators. Parental involvement in the school allows children to continue familiar relationships and experiences in the school curriculum and informs people at home about the knowledge explored at school. Dewey (1953) emphasized the view of the child and the meaning of the home context in his traditional educational theories. He stressed common goals, communication and constructing democratic community. He drew the model for interactional education in connection with nature, industrial life, research and home. Dewey thought that it was futile to separate school from the life around it. He criticized schools for the incapability of benefiting from the experiences coming out of the school. In Dewey´s opinion the biggest problem in schools was the separation from real life.

Despite Dewey´s thoughts, and the astonishment of many others, parental involvement has been defined educationally, socially and politically problematic in practice. Kuosmanen (1982) has noted that parents are not very eager to participate in learning in the school context, because they do not have time for that. Similar to Kuosmanen Bridge (2001) notes that if parents are involved, they are more often engaged in managerial roles than those directly connected with their children's learning. Managerial and financial roles are not democratic for parents living in different situations.

Partnership in education could be based on shared purpose and mutual skills but in practice decision making, knowledge, and activities have been determined and shared by the authorities of the organization. In practice parents have stayed in the background. In the fragmented postmodern world opportunities for parents to have a dialogue with their children have become scarce and possibilities for children to learn in familiar, relevant and contextual ways have diminished.

The interactional case study

Case study research examines closely one specific working entity and focuses on understanding the meanings in it. It gives an insight into a setting, the events in it and shows possible answers to why questions. The case study is real and therefore provides strong evidence in recorded practice. Action research compliments the case study. Action research is concerned with improving the practice in a working setting. It is a practical activity that involves change to the curriculum in order to improve it. Bridge (2001) stresses that changed action in practice is dependent upon changed thinking and understanding and therefore is not a simple project, it needs a lot of reflection and reaction. Action research tries to push forth critical thinking about values and in that way improve practices.

This case study research is especially interested in the interactional, educational functions of the working parts and the possibilities and findings of the action. The research involves children, teachers, parents and grandparents working collaboratively and reflectively. This action research shows that learning is not the plain text written in the document but is intertwined with contemporary and past experiences of children and adults. The hopes and plans for the future and the contemporary feelings, thoughts and knowledge are based on those experiences. In this research qualitative data was gathered using observations and notes, drawings and writings of the children and adults, photographs and focused discussions with the adults.

Research strategies

At first a joint meeting was held with the teachers in both case studies to clarify ideas about parental involvement, curriculum practices and daily life in school. The ideas were then discussed with parents at the following joint meeting. Parents expressed some wishes which were noted in the following plans. In both cases the phenomenon was first examined in school and then a letter about it was sent home with the child. In the letter the goals of the examination were presented and the adults were asked to discuss the phenomenon and draw pictures concerning it together with the child in light of their own experiences, knowledge and feelings. Small and large, thin and thick pieces of paper with drawings and writings were then brought back to school and discussed at school together with the children and the teacher. The process then proceeded to connect the phenomenon in larger social connections and in the goals of the curriculum. Exhibitions of children's, parents' and grandparents' works were organized. At the end of the process meetings were held together with parents and children, in the latter case those focused discussions were recorded as well as the verbal reflection of the teacher who was involved in the case research.

Environmental project in Saarenmaa

The first co-operational project took place in an elementary-school in Saarenmaa in the Spring . The interactive process lasted for five months and was integrated in environmental education and was carried out especially in art education though the main interest was focused in the environment in all education. The common educational goal in art education was to awaken sensitivity in meeting and perceiving environmental phenomena and through sensitivity to be able to change and improve own environmental actions. Connections with home contexts were built up twice or even four times every month. Environmental examinations in school were

focused on the phenomena which situated near children's everyday life; home, the way to school and the surroundings of the school. The adults at home were asked to discuss and draw pictures together with the child concerning the same phenomena in the light of what they remembered of their own life in the same age as the child. The art educational ongoing of the process in school had goals of the curriculum and visual meanings; colors, shapes, textures and relationships in space and time. (Autio-Hiltunen & Kärkkäinen 1995.)

Feelings and moomins in Konnevesi

The latest co-operational, art educational project took place in a small preschool in Konnevesi just before Christmas and lasted for one month. The children in this project were about six years old. At home they used to watch a popular animated TV-series about the life and adventures of Moomin troll in the evening. All of the children seemed to be frightened and excited about an odd troll called Mörkö in the series. So the process was planned on feelings and especially those feelings which were experienced while looking at the TV-animation.

The process began with the excitement of birth. At home adults were asked to tell stories and draw pictures together with the child about the birth of a child and stories in which they remembered their own birth. The children brought to school the visualized stories. The process continued with discussing the messages together and connecting the excitement of birth in the Moomin world. The odd and frightening Mörkö troll had also been a newborn baby and he had a mother who cared for him. The children used clay and other materials to build and form baby Mörkö and his necessities.

Baby Mörkö needed a place to live in, a home to feel comfortable in. Before beginning to plan the home for the troll, the parents were asked to speak about and visualize the home they had when they were very young children. Based on those pictured stories the children began to plan a place for the growing and frightening Mörkö in school. Mörkö was ice-cold, so they wanted his home to look frozen and collected material for that. The children really liked to provide the troll home with exciting details that could be used by the troll family.

The process of the Mörkö culminated when he grew a little, examined the environment and saw something that he was very frightened. Before touching upon fear more, the adults at home were asked to discuss and visualize together with the child those fears they had as children and the child's current fears. Fearful feelings were examined and discussed at school and then the children imagined what Mörkö was afraid of. The large paintings that were made to hang in the windows were very imaginative and impressive and there were lots of them.

The process finished just before Christmas, so the last feeling that was examined was the longing and waiting for Christmas. Adults at home were asked to tell and visualize together with the child Christmas stories that they remembered and plans they had for the approaching Christmas. Those stories in the hands and minds children constructed in school a picture book of Christmas in the Moomin world and planned and made three overhead animations for the Christmas party.

Work in this process was based on the communication between children and adults in the home context. Actions at home were not directed technically or with art educational goals. In the school context doing and learning was dealt with visual targets; painting, drawing and constructing, big and small, light and dark, in front and behind, under and above, staying still and moving. Visual targets were not given as orders but like light flashes or fantasies for children to catch if they needed them in their perceiving, imagining and learning process.

The findings of the process

In the two processes it was discovered that parents and grandparents form a resource of knowledge and power for children's' learning that can be combined with the curriculum knowledge. Co-operation depended on gender so that mothers more often co-operated and communicated with the child at home than fathers and generally they were mothers who participated in the focused discussions. The visual method was useful, almost all of those parents who participated also wanted to draw pictures. Drawing pictures seemed to bring back to mind things and details that had already been hidden aside for a long time. The materials that were used for visualizing at home were rather simple, any paper and pen was used for drawing and writing the messages. The older the generation was, the less color they used. The colors that the children used at home were powerless compared with the colors used at school; their quality seemed to be so weak that it was difficult to build any strong effects with them. Adults sometimes used the same ways to visualize space and perspective as children did and stress the emotionally important things like them. Some adults seemed to have left in their contemporary visualizations the ornamentations of their youth. Children were very interested in the pictures and stories of the adults. The parents and grandparents were eager to see the exhibitions that were constructed from the works of the participants. The participation of the parent at home seemed to influence the activity, interest and capabilities of the child in the school context to perceive the whole process better.

Science and art

When I was planning the interactive, communicative and transparent postmodern research project in the primary school context connecting with home contexts, I based it on the hermeneutical philosophy of education. According to it, learning occurs in complex interpretative relationships, in communicative, comprehending processes between generations and contexts. The view reminds me of the image of science as art or art as science; the detected sketching in a holistic, conceptualized experience of the factor, artefact, observer and the environment.

I picture the interactive, communicative learning process in the school and home context in the following way:

According to the picture the inside education that takes place in the school and home contexts is situated in a triangle. Education is situated in its private side, the side of the home. The private side (the side of the home) of education is rooted under the line of the earth or horizon and in the past. The common side (the side of the school) opens up in the air searching for different types of futuristical, social relationships. The educational spaces of school and home contexts are intertwined in communicative interactions, where common interests are examined on the bases of private and common meaning structures.

The magic of multicultural art education

Art education has targets for a child's individual and social growth and tries to understand the self and to approve the other. In art education multicultural phenomena are examined and analyzed. Art education seems to have meaning in empowering the emotions and ethic feelings. Based on Dewey's (1934, 1953) ideas and Kolb's (1984) thoughts concerning the importance of experience in learning, art education has sought problematic, procedural interactions where prejudices, contextual sources of knowledge, interpretation, reflection and producing are taken into consideration. As a result of the process, an aware, considered and shared experience is to be found (see Räsänen 1998). It has its roots in the historical and aesthetic tradition but is eager to find something surprisingly new. When trying to fit different cultures together, it is crucial to develop models for interactions to have possibilities to meet and to understand. All new and even strange materials and references may be used in the magic circle of art education.

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Developments in the position of parents in primary and secondary education in the Netherlands

Miek Laemers & Frans Brekelmans

In this contribution, developments that have occurred in the Netherlands in the last three years concerning the position of parents of education participants in primary and secondary schools, will be examined.[1] Relevant developments in legislation are described as well as jurisprudence in connection to the (legal) position of parents. In particular will be paused at recent developments around the assumption of a 'educational agreement', by which parents see possibilities to call on the school to fulfill their obligations. The practice of publication of education results in the media and the 'quality card' in secondary education will come up (for discussion). Attention will be spent at developments within the government policy, especially in the form of the note 'Parents and school: reinforcement of partnership'.[2]

Introduction

The government wishes to lend schools to an increasing degree autonomy, determining their education policy. Furthermore the legislator seeks a way between the concern of the government and the schools' own responsibilities.
Also the government wishes to bear in mind the rights and obligations of the participant or his legal representative (parent or guardian of a minor) and reckon with the part that the participant can have in the quality control.
Against this background the government has asked to be advised by the Advisory Council of Education about the position of the participant.[3]
An exploratory report has been published in July 1998 under the same title by the ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The conclusion of the Council reads that in the sectors primary and secondary education no improvements need to be maid in the position of the participant. The cabinet however disassociates slightly of this final conclusion: the coalition agreement of 1998 after all contained intentions of the cabinet to pay more attention to the position of the participant by reinforcement of the authority of parents and pupils in the school and the emphasizing of the equal position of all parents, who should not be excluded on basis of identity out of a council or board of representative advisory. These developments affect the position of the parents in different ways: on one side they influence their position as 'joint-designers' of education, on the other side on their position as consumers of education.
In the following, where not by the schools themselves performed measurement, evaluation and publication of the quality is at stake, the last perspective will be emphasized.

Legal measures

Over the last few years various legal measures haven been taken that aim to improve the position of parents: the Quality law, the regulation of participation in decision-making and participation in the board of the (public) school.[4]

Quality law: school plan, school prospectus and complaint procedure

The Scheveningen agreement on administrative renewal 1993-1994 contained worked out proposals for quality and information services to parents and pupils.[5]

The Quality law, a consequence of this agreement, units the - in this agreement still distinguished - internal quality care of the school and the external responsibility by introducing on the first of august 1998 the school plan, the school prospectus and complaint procedure in primary and secondary education. This law obliges schools to - next to what schools already do on their own initiative in the way of supplying information by school magazines, open house and information meetings - inform parents about the school on prescribed subjects. There has been a stiff discussion over the introduction of the Quality law: by the discussing of the bill was put forward that the law may not infringe on the freedom of education, that the government should confine to the necessary and that the principles of justice of proportionality and subsidiarity should be regarded.
The school plan, that the school board determines at least once every four years, is the quality document of the school. The school plan contains for instance the policy concerning the acceptance of sponsorship. The use of financial support can contribute to the upgrading of the quality of education. Regarding this subject as well as regarding the decision on the height of the parental contribution, parents have recently got more say in the matter.
The school prospectus, that the school board determines every year, contains for parents, guardians and pupils information on objectives, contents and methods (of working) of the school (article 14 Primary Education Act and article 24a Secondary Education Act). This information is meant for parents and guardians who already have a child in the school, but also for parents and guardians that consider registering their child at that school. Here also has been determined by law about which subjects the guide should contain information. These subjects concern on one side the responsibilities of the school concerning the educational point of view and on the other side the rights and obligations of the parents, guardians, pupils and school boards. The complaint procedure gives parents the possibilities to call on the school to account for its functioning (article 14 Primary Education Act and article 24 b Secondary Education Act).
In secondary school apply roughly speaking the same rules as drawn up for primary education concerning the school plan, the school prospectus and the right of complaint. Separate mentioning deserves the condition that the school prospectus in secondary school has to give information on the results that the school has reached with pupils: the percentage of pupils that moves on to a higher grade or different kind of education, the percentage of pupils that leaves the school without a certificate and the percentage of pupils that passes the final exams (article 24a Secondary Education Act).

School board and participation in decision-making

Parents can take part in an administration of the school for primary or secondary education. There are no legal regulations that lay down the minimum number of administration seats occupied by parents. An exception is being formed by the legal regulation that came into force on February 1997 and that requires that at least one third, but not a majority of the members of a public corporation or foundation that maintain public schools, is appointed on binding recommendations of the parents of the pupils that are registered on the school or schools in question.
The Participation in decision-making Act 1992 provides with a regulation of shared participation council (parents and staff). This law makes it possible to practice by right of approval and by right to be consulted concerning different aspects of education - among which the quality policy - and provides with a regulation to take a matter up with the arbitration board. Among other things for the determination or alteration of the specific use of the funds that have been received from the parents without the existence of a legal obligation, does the competent authorities need preceding approval of that part of the participation council that was chosen out of and

by the parents or pupils (article 9 sub of the Participation in decision-making Act 1992). That means for example that a decision of the competent authorities to reserve these funds to take an extra teacher into employment considering class-reduction and the thereto linked, expected quality improvement - as sometimes happened in the passed period - needs the approval of the parents. Approval is also required on the point of settlement of the student statutes. Recently the Lower House, after a discussion for years on and started by the trade union the AOb, decided that in primary education the participation council remains to exist, secondary education, professional and adult education will have a company council.

Otherwise does it seem that in the passed years undiminished continuing administrative increase in scale not to have led to an increase of influence of parents on the factual decision-making. If that means that - regarding the way in which administrative organization in mainlines looks like - further rules must be agreed on is doubtful. In the last years a situation has occurred in primary and secondary education in which the variety is so big that it is hard to determine how the local government can substantiate that for staff and parents a realistic involvement in the school will be possible.

Protection personal particulars Act

Not an education act, but indeed of importance for the position of the parents is this new act, that appeared on July 2000 in the Bulletin of Acts and came into force on September 2001. This Act regulates the privacy and privacy protection and applies to all organizations in the Netherlands, so on schools too. In this law the protection of personal particulars of pupils and parents is given an explicit chance. In regard to all computerized processing of personal particulars a duty applies to report to the Board of Protection personal particulars. A personal particular is every particular reducible on an individual (therefore too for example a class photograph). A separate rule applies to divorced parents: only if a pupil has not yet reached the age of sixteen the legal representatives can exercise the right of inspection of the by the school laid down particulars.
In principle both parents are the legal representatives. By divorce the parental rights are usually granted to both parents. Only in special situations will be deviated.
The Lower House has also agreed to the introduction of using a number for every individual member in education. This number is similar to the National Insurance Number. The educational acts indicate to what purpose these numbers may be used and to whom they may be supplied. Otherwise Protection personal particulars Act is practiced. Introduction is anticipated for 2002 in secondary education and in 2004 for primary education.

Publication of school achievements in the media and the 'Quality card' in secondary education

The inspectorate has been collecting data on performances of pupils on school level for the last few years. At the end of 1997 the newspaper 'Trouw' acquired these data (by a procedure based on the Publicity of administration Act) and published them in adapted form (namely after awarding marks per school) in the newspaper. This course of events has stepped up the discussion about the Quality card for secondary education to be issued by the inspectorate. The Quality card is a document that holds quantitative specifications about the school, whereby is taken into account the student characteristics and the school characteristics.
Quality cards were first published by the inspectorate at the beginning of the term 1998/1999, in the form of 16 regional guides and sites on the Web. This card is meant for parents as well as for schools. Parents and children in secondary education can verify how the school of their child performs. The card is also meant for parents, who have to choose a school for their child in group 8 of a primary school. Among

highly trained parents the familiarity with the regional guide is better known than among parents with a lower education.
Only ten percent find the guide useful for the selection of a school for their child; information meetings and advertisement by mouth-to-mouth advertisement give more to hold on to. Forty percent of the parents is convinced of the reliability of the specifications. They find more attention for less 'hard' criteria, like the atmosphere at school and student supervision, important.

Education policy
In the coalition agreement and in the two successive policy letters by the education budget the reinforcement of the position of the parents has been announced. Building on recently introduced instruments like the school prospectus, complaint procedure, Quality cards and public inspection reports, new steps will be taken for improvement of information, communication and participation. The cabinet takes as a starting point in the memorandum 'Parents and school: Reinforcement of partnership', that parents are primarily responsible for the upbringing of a child and that the school has a specific responsibility for the educational training of a child. For the development of a child it is important that parents and school understand each other well. It is a matter of 'partnership', based on equality and mutual rights and obligations. Parents need to be informed well about the quality of educational institutes. This enables them to make a balanced selection of a school and enter better equipped into the dialogue with the school. That is why information facilities to parents will be improved as follows:
- The inspectorate will - within the framework of the regular school supervision and the integral school supervision - also make reports that are intended for parents. The comparability between schools is in addition an important element.
- There will be a 'quality site' for parents with all relevant information about schools. For that purpose information from different sources, under which the inspectorate, will be compiled and made mutually comparable.
- There will be one national advisory center, where parents individually can call on for information and advice about matters that affect their relation with the school. With the cooperative national parents associations - at this moment especially active for members of parents councils and participation councils - will be spoken about the set up and lay out of the advisory center.

Concerning the communication between parents and school a lot of material and expertise is available. Distribution of material and exchange of expertise is however not common, by which there is a fragmentation in the supply. As announced in the memorandum ' To work with educational chances' a publication will be made in which schools can acquaint themselves with success and failure factors where it concerns the relation with parents. Furthermore a parents campaign will start that means to involve more the parents of children in disadvantage situations, in pre and early school education.
The national pedagogical centers link up in their activities for parents to this approach. Also in training and continuing education of teachers attention will be paid to the importance of a good communication between school and parents. In connection to participation the cabinet has emphasized in the coalition agreement the importance of an equal position of all parents of to the school admitted children, regardless of their ideology. That is why it is suggested to lay down by law that schools may not exclude parents - on grounds of ideology - out of the participation structure. With periodical evaluations will be considered in how far this regulation will be of influence in real terms on the admittance policy of schools. The opportunity of parents to practice influence on the foundation of the school will be strengthened by the way of participation council (or the future school council) will get a legal approval right about a basic decision of the

competent authorities to alter the foundation (the so called color fading or discoloring). This legal consent right will replace the present right to advise. Besides that - as a reinforcement of the influence of parents by participation - the power of initiative right of the parents section in the participation council, will be strengthened. This happens by declaring the arbitration regulation for participation applicable for initiative-proposals, that are submitted by the parents section to the school administration. On the pretext of 'The school to the parents' there has been pleaded for the possibility of parents to enforce change in the foundation of the school (the so called color fading or discoloring) before. In the first Kok-cabinet this viewpoint was introduced in the memorandum 'The identity of the school in a multiform society'. The cabinet wanted to strengthen the position of the parents in the school administration, a viewpoint that was later confirmed in cabinet statements. At that time was already explicitly stated that parents may not be excluded from administration or participation bodies on grounds of ideology. Maybe also by the constitutional impediment to intervene in the administrational structure of private schools there has not been concretely acted upon these statements.

Changes within the educational supervision
In continuation on the policy document 'Variety and Guarantee' named 'To a stimulating supervision' the minister formulates as one the basic assumptions of education: education is primarily there for parents and participants.
The educational institutes must be positioned in society in a way that all parties, parents, participants, teachers, management and administration can realize their responsibilities.
Drastic developments within the educational supervision occurred and still are occurring. The inspectorate makes an evaluation report of every individual school that, says the inspectorate, should be as brief as possible and clearly written for use of different target groups. The evaluation report is public, which means that parents who are interested may take note and take their advantage: they can determine if their child is going or will be going to the right school. The element of benchmarking in the report enables parents to make their choice for a school in a comparable situation, one that succeeds better in realizing aspects of the definition of quality. Over what is measured by the inspectorate is however a discussion: on the one hand there are measurable factors, on the other hand there are issues that are more difficult to grasp, like the atmosphere at school and the way teachers and students treat each other.
Many parents will disagree with the inspectorate in the respect of handling criteria to determine the quality of a school. When the legislator in the Act on educational supervision lays down that the inspectorate has the task and the qualification to develop an examination frame and that this will happen in consultation with parties concerned and in a professional manner, than it is advisable to regard parents also as a party concerned. It should be mentioned that concrete developments already show that the freedom to search for 'the best schools' in practice can lead to a unwanted division. An alarming phenomenon is for example that autochthonous parents divert to schools with less foreign pupils. In 1999 questions were asked by a Lower House member at the state secretary for Education, Culture and Science and the minister for Big Cities and integration policies about 'black' schools and actions that should be taken to stop segregation. The questioner referred to an opinion poll, that showed that thirty percent of the parents would choose to send their children to a 'white' school twelve kilometers further on in stead of to a black school in the neighborhood, which means a white flight. Overregistrations for schools with a good reputation led to having to dictate admittance criteria by those schools (like the criterion of the distance of the school to the residence of the parents). Consequently parents had to experience that they had to fall back on schools that where not on their priority list. When parents have chosen a school, they may then be confronted with the admittance policy of that

school. Public schools are accessible for all children without distinction between religion or ideology. Nevertheless public schools can refuse children on a few limited grounds, for example because the school is 'full' and educational considerations do not permit further grow. This situation occurs frequently in big cities. Parents have to fall back on a school of second, even third choice. Depending on the regional situation schools may pursue a more or less selective policy, at the expense of certain groups of students. In short: by use of the own policy space, schools can lay down their own admittance policy and that policy may frustrate the choice of school of parents on the base of quality judgment by the inspectorate. A matter that may also play a part in the choice of a school 'of superior quality' are the costs that are involved concerning the costs of transportation to such a school. The legislation and jurisprudence concerning article 4 Primary Education Act make compensation of traveling expenses possible if objections exist against the foundation or the public character of nearby situated schools. Objections only against the quality of school situated nearby are however not honored. That means, that if parents let themselves be led by quality reports they will have to pay for the costs of transportation for their child to a school situated further on. In secondary education a general regulation does not exist for compensation of costs of student transportation. Only parents with the lowest income qualify for a (often not sufficient) subsidy based on the Act subsidy study expanses.
Summarizing it is conceivable that parents cannot realize their 'quality choice' by the concrete offer of schools, the admittance policy and the costs or other private considerations.

Jurisprudence
Next to developments in legislation and policy judicial decisions in the past period are determined for the developments in the position of parents and education participants. A selection out of the colorful series of statements.

The four day schoolweek
July 1999 the president of the Court in Amsterdam (AB 2000, 106) decided that the decision of an administration of a few schools for public education whereby was determined that the pupils of elementary school starting the new school year would have a day off every other week was not against the law and neither against the motivation - and trust - principle. The relevant request of the parent was subsequently refused.

Freedom of choice of school
In the judgment of the Council of State, department administrative jurisdiction, of October 1999 was stated that there was no conflict with the right from parents to choose freely education regarding First Protocol, article 2 European Treaty for protection of the rights of mankind and fundamental liberties (EVRM). It concerned the refusal to grant a scholarship for the benefit of traveling costs to the Steiner school in B. This refusal was based on the order, regulating the award of scholarships in the municipality H and on the guidelines that are employed at the execution of the Order. By the stipulation of the costs of studying one is supposed to go the cheapest and closest institute, regardless of the religious foundation and the educational system of the institute. Traveling costs are not compensated in regard to an education given in H, neither in regard to a comparable education given in an institute outside H, which has been chosen because of personal preference with regard to the religious foundation on of the system of education. The department is of the opinion that the Order nor the guidelines are in conflict with article 2 First Protocol at the EVRM. There is no question of denial of the possibility to follow the desired education at the Steiner School in B, so desired by the parents. The stipulation does not extend so far that the (lower) government, if she by local acts offers the possibility for granting a scholarship to follow secondary education, where it comes to a deliberate choice in a certain direction, is held tot compensate traveling costs.

The department is furthermore with the court of the opinion that what the parent has pleaded concerning the circumstances in which she finds herself and the different education that is given at the Steiner school does not have to be a reason to enforcement of the so called hardship clause.

Educational agreement
In a judgment of the Court of Amsterdam in 1999 J.O. 1999/83 (Schaapman), there has been stated that there was a question of shortcoming of the competent authorities in legal obligation resulting from the articles 8 and 9 of the former Primary Education Act by the behavior of the director of the school. The judge confirmed the sentences of the cantonal magistrate in the matter of the payment of compensation by the competent authorities to the parent because of costs of putting her son tot the test and extra lessons given to her son. The case Schaapman has made clear that parents based on existing educational agreements between them and competent authorities of the school can claim on qualitative good education: the cantonal magistrate has put the parent in the right, who called to account the municipality as competent authorities of the school because of unsatisfactory fulfillment of the educational agreement, and this decision has been confirmed in a court of appeal. Never before in jurisprudence has been determined that a competent authority is compelled to pay compensation because of insufficient quality of education. The court has assumed that for the school exists an 'effort agreement', which means that at least the teaching material should be dealt with that is included in the program.
This duty to provide for has also been included in article 10 Primary Education Act, where is determined that the competent authorities cares for the quality of the education at school, which means in any case: the execution of the school plan, in such a way that the legal and own assignments will be realized.
As clearer assignments are appointed in the school plan parents can claim more fulfillment. This case makes clear that when a parent has plain indications that the quality of education at the school of his child is unsatisfactory he can go to court. If this case on a large scale will be followed, has to be seen. Before a parent appeals to the court, other ways can be followed. A badly functioning competent authority and a ditto management can be called on to account by the participation council. Also the internal complaint commission and the inspectorate can first be called in, when it comes to realizing qualitative good education.

The freedom of the school to organize the education surpasses wish of parents
The presiding judge Amsterdam (July 29th 1999, JO 1999, p. 136) dismissed the demand of a parent to have a pupil skip one group. The president took as a basic principle that the school board has in principle the competence to organize the education as they wish. The rules that defendant applies for skipping a class has to be respected by the prosecutors.

Admittance disabled pupil to a regular elementary school
The department of administration of justice of the Council of State (July 26th 1999; the challenged judgment of the Court Haarlem July 21st was confirmed, J.O., 1999, p. 139) went into the refusal of admitting a multiple disabled pupil to a (public) elementary school. The department decided that - taking into account the already existing high work pressure of the teachers - not can be excluded that further increase of the work pressure shall have considerable negative consequences for the other pupils. It cannot be stated that Burgomaster and Aldermen by assessment of all involved interests could not have come to their decision.

School responsible for safety
In the verdict of the Court Utrecht (October 9th 2000, J.O. , 2001/1) was stated, that the negligent acting of swimming instructors and teachers, because of which a pupil died, can be attributed to the competent authorities.

The swimming as part of the curriculum belongs to the ordinary school activities; the conduct of the teachers falls therefore within the range of influence of the competent authorities. This case with sad determination is supposed to lead to the necessary consultation between school and swimming pool concerning the safety of the children, that are entrusted to them in the frame of swimming as part of the curriculum.

Direct measurement

Direct measurement is a method to probe the wishes of parents concerning the foundations of a new to establish school directly and can consequently do more justice to these wishes, than the indirect method, that acts on by passing on the historically grown situation. Recognition of direct meeting means also more direct influence of parents on the stock of schools. About the article 75 Primary Education Act goes the verdict of the department of Administration of Justice of the Council of State (January 26th 1999, J.O. 1999/3, p. 59) This department states: direct measurement is a supplementary method to submitted prognosis as an indirect measurement gives insufficient details for the stipulation of the demand. A higher percentage of interest in a outside of the input area situated district is not relevant. The supplementary character of direct measurement also came forward in the verdict of the department of administration of justice of the Council of State (January 28th 1999 , J.O. 1993/3, p. 62; Two Islamic elementary schools in The Hague). The department decided that has been chosen for the possibility to include data from direct measurement in those cases in which the municipal interest percentage cannot be calculated or cannot be considered representative. This is moreover the case in new housing developments where the population construction considerably deviates from the municipality as a whole.

Finally

The increasing independence of schools related to the freedom of education has led to legal regulations that offer a frame for the quality policy of schools. Moreover a greater involvement for parents has been provided than before. Generally speaking can be said that parents have at their disposal a maximum of information about the quality of the school. The school prospectus and the school card fulfill a function concerning the output of the school. Because of the changing relations between government and institutes, the position of the participant has also changed. The idea is - by lesser guidance of the government of educational institutes - that the participant can perform as a ‘countervailing power’ towards the more autonomous institutes. There will be judged that in real terms the strengthening of the position of the participant is restricted in spite of the taken regulations. Just like other actors in the environment of the school who will be presented as a countervailing power, the educational participant stands in a dependent position in relation to the school, which hinders its functioning as countervailing power.

Notes

1 There are also schools for 'special' education (s*peciaal onderwijs)*: children with learning difficulties or behavior problems who cannot be taught in 'ordinary' primary schools can attend a special school for primary education. Ordinary and special primary schools now work together so that as many children as possible can remain in 'ordinary' schools. This is actively promoted by the government under the slogan 'going to school together'. In other words, special schools are intended only for those children who really cannot manage at an ordinary school, even with special help. There are also special schools for children with impaired hearing or vision, children with serious speech defects, physically disabled children, children who are chronically sick, children with serious learning difficulties, severely maladjusted children and children at school attached to pedagogical institutes (for children with psychological problems).
Plans for the future: more and more children with disabilities are now going to their local school instead of a special school because their parents are keen for them to mix with non-disabled children. This means that they can go to a school near their home, in familiar surroundings, and be with friends. The current method of funding schools was not designed for this. A new system is therefore being planned, which will involve allocating children with disabilities a personal budget that travels with them (back-pack).

2 Kamerstukken II 2000-2001, 27 680, nr. 1.

3 The Advisory Council of Education (*Onderwijsraad*) is the national advisory body that advises the government on the broad outline of educational policy and educational legislation. For more information see: www.onderwijsraad.nl.

4 Public-authority schools (*openbare scholen*): approximately one third of all children go to a public-authority school, i.e. a school governed by the municipal council or by a governing committee appointed by the council. Public-authority schools do not identify with a particular religion or outlook on life. They are open to children of all religions and beliefs. If parents would like their children to receive instruction in a particular faith or belief, this can be arranged.
Private schools (*bijzondere scholen*): about two third of all children attend a private school. There are many different types of private schools. Most are Roman Catholic or Protestant, but there are also Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Humanist and Steiner schools as well as non-denominational private schools. Private schools are governed by an association (which parents can join) or a foundation.

5 *Schevenings akkoord*: an agreement between the ministry for Education, Culture and Science and the local authorities and the association of private schools.

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Evaluation of the legal functions of the complaints regulation in primary and secondary education in the Netherlands

Juliette Vermaas

Introduction

Educational legislation underwent a change on 1 August 1998 with the introduction of the Quality Act. The aim of this act is to improve the quality of education and to augment the involvement of parents and pupils in school matters. Part of this Quality Act is a complaints regulation which gives parents, pupils, and staff the legal opportunity to lodge complaints. In addition, the right of complaint has a valuable warning function with regard to the quality of education.

The enactment of the Quality Act meant that school boards were compelled to introduce a complaints regulation and to establish a complaints committee or join a regional or national complaints committee. To support the school boards, the national organizations for parents, staff, school management and boards jointly drafted a model complaints regulation for primary and secondary education. In addition, the national governing bodies instituted a national complaints committee for their members.

In early 2000, a year and a half after the complaints regulation was introduced, the national complaints committees observed that both parents and schools are often insufficiently aware of the procedure and how to access the complaints committee. To gain an understanding of the ways in which school boards have implemented statutory stipulations for a complaints regulation and how they assess their complaints committee's method of working, the IVA at Tilburg University has carried out an evaluation study into the complaints regulation.

This paper discusses the results of the evaluation study into the complaints regulation. The central question was to what extent the objectives of the statutory regulation are being met in the current situation. Before this question is addressed in section 3, section 2 presents an overview of the use that is made of the complaints regulation. The paper concludes with recommendations for schools and national organizations to improve the effectuation of the complaints regulation. The research design is concisely presented in the appendix.

Complaints regulation

Which type of complaints regulation is often used?

On the same date as the commencement of the Complaints regulation, the national organizations for parents, staff, school management, and boards drafted the model complaints regulation. The main difference between the statutory regulation and the model complaints regulation is that the model complaints regulation is more comprehensive than the law: anyone involved in the school may complain or be charged. In addition, the model complaints regulation prioritizes the role of the contact person or the complaints officer. With regard to the nature of the complaints, however, the model complaints

regulation is narrower than the law: only complaints concerning concrete behavior or decisions (or the omission of behavior or decisions) that have been lodged with the committee within a year will be dealt with.

The research shows that 70% of the respondents employ the model complaints regulation. All complaints committees also make use of the model complaints regulation. Interviews did show, however, that schools and complaints committees interpret parts of the model complaints regulation in different ways. The main differences concern terms that are applied, proceedings during the hearing, and the role and tasks of the complaints officer.

Which complaints committee have most schools joined?
Out of the total respondents, 57% have joined a national complaints committee, 14% have joined a regional or provincial committee, and 22% have instated their own committees (see Figure 1). At Protestant schools, the rank and file membership is the greatest; at Roman Catholic schools, it is the lowest. Schools with their own complaints committees are mainly found in the Roman Catholic denomination and in secondary education. The main grounds for joining a national complaints committee include expense, expertise, and independence, though the national complaints committees are also considered too slow and too formalistic in their handling of complaints. The schools' own or regional committees were chosen particularly for their efficiency, involvement in the school, or their less formalistic attitude.

Number and kind of complaints
In 1998 and 1999, the four national complaints committees processed a total of 200 complaints. This number was much higher than expected and even increased in the school year 1999/2000. It turns out that parents often lodge a complaint without the school's intermediation or that schools are too quick to refer parents. As a consequence, complaints committees receive many minor complaints that could very well have been dealt with by the schools themselves.
Most of the 96 complaints that were analyzed concerned the teacher's or the school board's course of action or improper administration (see Figure 2). The phrase *course of action* covers mental and physical intimidation or ill-treatment, irresponsible pedagogy, creation of an unsafe climate in the school, inadequate supervision, or misdiagnosis. The phrase *improper administration* covers complaints processing by the school management or competent authorities, attitude towards, or communication with, parents, quality of instruction, hygiene, or collection of the parental contribution. The term *promotion* covers complaints concerning a pupil's moving up to a higher form, exam results, and recommendations regarding school type or secondary education. The *sanction* category covers complaints about sanctions against a pupil, such as suspension or expulsion. Often, there is a combination of complaints: the teacher has done something wrong, according to the parents; the school management has not intervened; and the competent authority has not taken the complaint seriously. The underlying problem with most complaints is miscommunication between parents and the school.

Out of the 96 complaints that were analyzed, one-third were judged (partially) valid and 40% invalid. In addition, 10% of the complaints were still in the process of being dealt with or were deferred due to criminal investigation. The remaining complaints were inadmissible. A complaint is declared inadmissible by the national complaints committees if it has expired (i.e., if it has not been filed within a year), if the complaint is outside the school's sphere of influence, if there is another possibility to express the complaint (such as a procedure for lodging an objection), or if the behavior is not convincingly concrete.

Complaints are generally considered valid by the national complaints committees if they concern

matters of omission by the board or the school management, if the complaint has been incorrectly dealt with, or if the board or the school management 'had not been able to reach the decision concerned after serious consideration.' Especially complaints against a competent authority or the school management are declared (partially) valid. Complaints specifically focusing on a teacher's course of action - particularly complaints concerning sexual harassment or a teacher's seizing a pupil roughly - are more often declared invalid. This is also the case for complaints concerning a pupil's promotion. The arguments for invalidating complaints are insufficient evidence, no witnesses, failure to make a reasonable case, the defendant having taken serious consideration, or the accusation having been refuted.

Besides passing judgement, the national complaints committees often advise schools how to prevent such complaints in future. Figure 3 presents an overview of the prevailing kinds of advice.

Evaluation of the complaints regulation
Fifty per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the complaints regulation. Of the schools that have their own complaints committee, 60% were even very satisfied with the complaints regulation. In primary education, the majority of respondents (50%) were dissatisfied with the regulation, whereas the majority of the respondents in secondary education (62%) were satisfied.

The respondents were asked to assess the complaints regulation by means of a number of propositions. Three-quarters of the respondents agreed with the proposition that the complaints regulation forces the school to take complaints seriously. More than half believed the complaints regulation is a fine way to resolve complaints within the school. Nevertheless, only one-third of the respondents felt that the complaints regulation in their school helped to improve the quality of education.

Interviews indicate that appeals to the complaints committees generate a lot of tension, questions, and frustrations at schools: What about the pupil's interests? The parents push themselves to the fore. Is my performance being questioned? How can the members of such a complaints committee say anything about the matter or about me?, etc. Some complaints also give rise to conflict or polarization among teachers, which affects the atmosphere at the school. Yet, most schools that were interviewed felt that the complaints regulation made a positive contribution to the resolution of complaints. It forces schools to take complaints seriously. Because the procedure has been formalized, parents can take their complaints to the proper places. Moreover, schools that have had to deal with a complaint indicate that this has made them more aware of the importance of sound communication with parents and a proper complaints procedure.

Evaluation of the complaints committee
The responses to the propositions show that three-quarters of the respondents endorse the importance of the complaints committee as a component of the complaints regulation: they are happy to be advised on complaints by an independent body. Half of the respondents feel that the complaints committee should not be open to just any kind of complaint, and 90% believe that the complaints committee must be able to refer a complaint back to the school if the school has done nothing with the complaint. Three-quarters of the respondents, moreover, feel that the complaints committee should deploy intermediation as an instrument to prevent escalation of complaints.

Well over 50% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied on all scores with the service of the complaints committee. Schools that have their own complaints committees are more satisfied with accessibility by phone, cooperation, and

transparency of the procedure than schools that have joined a national, provincial, or regional complaints committee. The greatest minus of all complaints committees concerns the lengthy handling procedures.

The complaints committee's method of working was evaluated as good or very good by more than half of the schools that have had to deal with a complaint. A positive extreme here is evaluations of the committee's independence, which was evaluated as good or very good by three-quarters of all respondents. A negative extreme concerns the total length of the procedure: only 40% evaluated this as good, and one-third qualified it as moderate to bad. Especially schools that have their own complaints committees are very positive about handling procedures. They particularly praise rapidity and meticulousness. The experiences of schools that joined a national complaints committee are less positive with regard to support and rapidity.

Has the complaints regulation met the objectives of the law?

Original objective of the complaints regulation

In the Explanatory Memorandum of the Quality Act,[1] the complaints regulation is considered to be the crowning piece of the regulation as concerns the position of parents and pupils in the school context. Because of the introduction of the complaints regulation, parents and pupils can formally lodge their complaint about a school.

The complaints regulation is not only good for parents and pupils, it is also very important for schools themselves. Through the complaints regulation, the school receives signals that can support it in improving education and the smooth running of the school. The responsibilities which schools bear as regards their functioning and the possible consequences in case they do not perform well are the reason that schools have an interest in a careful handling of complaints by parents and pupils. In the above-mentioned memorandum on the quality policy in education, the secretary of education voiced the expectation that the complaints regulation will have a stimulating effect on quality awareness in schools. From this point of view, a complaint is 'unrequested advice' and the complaints regulation is a link in the quality policy to be followed by schools.

There is another reason why the introduction of the complaints regulation is important. In the period that the relevant memorandum was written, the Inspectorate of Education received a total of approximately 3,000 complaints a year. It appeared that, in many cases, the complainant had not yet reported his complaint to the principal or the competent authoritative body of the school in question. The undersecretary therefore hoped that a broadly publicized complaints regulation would prevent complainants from directly applying to the Education Inspectorate in the future.[2] The purpose of the complaints regulation is that as many complaints as possible are solved at the school level. The right to complain must lead to schools paying more attention to the way in which communication with parents and pupils is handled. It could thus contribute to the dialogue between the supplier (the school) and the used (parent and pupil).

The complaints regulation's points of departure

In order to realize the objectives of the complaints regulation, the regulation should meet certain requirements: it has to be a framework regulation, and not a nationwide, uniform regulation; that is, it should be a low threshold arrangement, without limitations as to the type of complaint or the involvement of the complainant.

Framework regulation

As concerns the type of regulation, the law explicitly opts for a framework regulation. The undersecretary formulated it as follows: 'It must not be a ponderous regulation. In my opinion, it must be as easy as possible. I am thinking of a law that provides a complaints regulation and that

indicates where people can submit their complaints.'[3]
The implementation of the complaints regulation is left to the discretion of the school, within the scope of the law. The reason for this is that a nationwide, uniform regulation would not do justice to the enormous diversity of situations within schools; a large school, for example, may need a different regime than a small school.[4] The idea is that schools can make their own complaints regulation on the basis of some model complaints regulations. In addition, according to the Explanatory Memorandum, the aim is '..., in a specific community as formed by a school, to enable a tailor-made complaints regulation to be formulated in close consultation between the various parties involved in this community.'[5]

The statutory regulation has indeed materialized as nothing more than a framework regulation with many liberties for the competent authorities. However, this study shows that 70% of the respondents make use of the model complaints regulation. This regulation gives clear guidelines regarding the handling of complaints by schools and by the complaints commission. The advantage of the model regulation is that not every school has a different regime. The disadvantage is that the ideal of 'a regulation tailored to the situation of a particular school' has not been realized. It also appears that the model complaints regulation has stimulated the trend of making complaints into lawsuits by, among other things, setting limitation periods.

Low threshold arrangement
As concerns the handling of complaints, the law has opted for a low threshold arrangement. The regulation must stimulate that as many complaints as possible are handled at school level. The great majority of cases on the daily routine in the school can be handled appropriately in consultation between parents, pupils, staff, and school management. Only in the event that this is not possible, because of the nature of the complaint or if the complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily, can the complaints regulation be used. Given the wish to implement a low threshold arrangement, the idea is to install a trusted person and their own or a regional complaints commission that is close to the school to first receive the complaints.

The study shows that more than half of the respondents (57%) have joined a national complaints commission. This development is at right angles to the idea of a low threshold arrangement close to the school. The schools participating in the survey that opted for a national complaints commission mentioned the following reasons: the cost aspect, the expertise, and the preference for an independent commission that is not linked to the school. These advantages of a national commission are balanced by several disadvantages. The great number of complaints that are lodged with the national complaints committees gives rise not only to further professionalization, but also to lengthy handling terms. The independence of the national complaints committees and the great distance from the schools entail that the national committees' approach is rather legal and formal.

No restrictions on subjects and involvement of complainant
The statutory complaints regulation states that a complaint may concern behavior and decisions of the competent authorities or staff, including discrimination, or the omission of behavior or decisions by the competent authorities or staff. The law does not specify subjects about which complaints can be filed. According to the Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the Quality Act, this was a conscious decision so as not to restrict the options of those involved unnecessarily. The Act also keeps open the possibility for a complaint to be filed by those not directly involved in an incident at the school, also in case someone who is directly involved does not wish to lodge a complaint for whatever reason. For example, an action against a pupil may negatively impact the educational climate in a

group. According to the undersecretary, this will increase the involvement of parents and pupils in the school.[6]

This study shows that the first issue, i.e., not restricting subjects, has indeed been realized but not to the satisfaction of either the respondents or the schools that were interviewed. Because the complaints regulation does not specify proper subjects for complaint, the schools feel that many futile complaints are being filed and that manageability is deteriorating for schools and complaints committees alike.

The second issue, i.e., the possibility of complaint by those not directly involved, has not been realized. The model complaints regulation and the complaints committees that were interviewed will only consider complaints that emanate directly from the complainant.

Functions of the complaints regulation

The objective of the statutory complaints regulation can be stated in terms of three functions of the right of complaint:

1. to offer a legal possibility to parents, pupils, and staff to file complaints: *the legal function*;
2. to improve the quality of education at schools: *the warning function*;
3. to improve communication between the school, the pupils, and the parents: *the communication function*.

Of these three functions, the legal function of the complaints regulation has been realized most noticeably. Parents have somewhere to go, and this has a reassuring effect. The court is often too great and costly a move, whereas the complaints regulation is a procedure that ought to be known to everyone. Considering the large number of complaints, there is a clear need for the complaints regulation, and parents, teachers, or pupils know their way to the complaints committee with their complaints.

The respondents and schools that were interviewed do argue that the complaints regulation has given rise to a legal or formal handling of complaints that might also have been dealt with by the schools themselves. The legal function of the complaints regulation is especially evident in the legal approach of the national complaints committees: the complaints committee has become the gateway to, or the substitute for, the judge. All this is reinforced by the model complaints regulation, which states that complaints are inadmissible if they are filed one year after date or if they do not concern concrete behavior.

The complaints regulation was also expected to have a stimulating influence on quality awareness at the school. It was to enable the school to pick up signals that might be used to improve education and the running of the school. However, the research results show that the warning function that the complaints regulation was meant to have has not yet lived up to its promise. Only one-third of the respondents feel that the complaints regulation has contributed to improving the quality of education. The majority (47%) had no opinion on this matter. Schools themselves see little effect on the quality of education and have taken few measures to prevent complaints from arising in future. Too many complaints are referred to the committee; complaints are considered a nuisance rather than an opportunity for quality improvement, though some schools were actually aware of the warning function the complaints regulation may have.

The communication function of the complaints regulation has not come into its own yet either. Although three-quarters of the respondents believe that the complaints regulation forces the school to take complaints seriously, miscommunication with parents remains the number one cause of many complaints. Some schools that were interviewed did indicate how going through the procedure with the complaints committee has made them more aware of the

importance of communication with parents and pupils and how much tension could have been prevented if the complaint had been dealt with at the school itself.

Final evaluation of the legal functions of the complaints regulation

In terms of its functions, it would seem that the current complaints regulation overemphasizes the legal function at the expense of the warning and communication functions. Judging by the large number of complaints that have been lodged with the complaints committee since the regulation was introduced, the regulation has not yet managed to bring about that complaints - excepting major complaints like sexual harassment or violence - are resolved as much as possible by the schools themselves. Apparently, the regulation insufficiently encourages schools and complaints committees to attach warning and communication functions to the right of complaint. The research results point at the following causes for this:

1. *The attitude of the schools themselves*: schools are often insufficiently aware of the importance of the complaints regulation for quality care. For many schools, the complaints regulation is a paper tiger, which only comes to life when the school is confronted with a complaint. Moreover, it appears that many schools are not sure how to handle complaints. The complaints regulation cannot do much about this.
2. *The presence of the complaints committees*: the complaints committees are considered as agencies where the school can shelve a complaint: 'If we get a complaint, we now have a complaints committee where it can be deposited.' This is why schools fail to consider it their own responsibility to deal with complaints and to use them as instruments for improving the quality of education.
3. *The complaint committees' legal method of working*: because complaints are inadmissible if they are filed a year after date or if the behavior is not sufficiently concrete, the significance of the complaint for improving the quality of education at the school concerned is disregarded.
4. *The financial arrangement*: schools only receive financial compensation for joining a complaints committee, but not for other aspects. This does not provide any incentive to schools to prevent complaints from arising.

On the basis of the research results, the brochure entitled *The complaints regulation in primary and secondary education: Mirror or lightening rod?* presents recommendations to remove or mitigate the causes mentioned above and reinforce the warning and communication functions of the regulation. However, the legal function should not be lost sight of, which is not always easy, as the following dilemma demonstrates. A large majority of the schools that were investigated feel there should be a mechanism to filter out insignificant complaints and that the complaints committee should be able to return a complaint to the school if it has done nothing about it. This would benefit the warning and communication functions of the complaints regulation. However, bringing in the complaints committee only after all courses open to the school have been taken is diametrically opposed to the legal function of the complaints regulation, which is to offer an accessible facility to parents and pupils. In improving complaints handling by schools and complaints committees, finding a balance between the three functions of the right of complaint is of the utmost importance.

Recommendations

Recommendations for schools

First, a school should try everything to solve the complaint. In this way,
possible escalation of the conflict can be prevented. From the moment a complaint is filed with
a complaints committee, formal, often judicial and time-consuming steps, are taken. Moreover, if staff have to turn to a complaints committee, this causes a lot of tension: an official body, at a

distance, is now getting involved in the school's performance and their own. The consequences of turning to a complaints committee are sometimes counter-productive when finding a solution; in practice, the parties concerned prove to have increasingly more opposing viewpoints. By first trying to solve the complaint internally, the parties are more likely to solve it quickly and it will cost less time for parents, managers, teachers, and authorities as well as the complaints committee. The relation between the parties concerned can be guarded more efficiently, since fewer people are involved and the talks are informal, so they are less emotionally charged. Furthermore, the number of complaints filed with the complaints committee can decrease by dealing with the complaints at school. The additional effect is that the time required to deal with complaints by the complaints committee can possibly become shorter.

The following tips can help to carefully deal with complaints at school:
Report everything in writing. This gives parents the feeling that they are taken seriously and it enables the board to evaluate everything after one year.

- See to it that professionals are available to support and coach you on dealing with a complaint.
- See to it that the official bodies in the school know what is going on, so that they can adequately respond to parents' questions.
- Appoint the right people as mediators; people with authority, personality, and certain social and communicative skills.
- Offer sufficient training and support to the mediator and contact person.
- Appoint a mediator for the accused. In this way, the balance is secured between the relevant interests.

Recommendations for complaints committees and national organizations
Recommendations which are needed with regard to the work of the complaints committees relate to reducing the terms, exchanging experiences between complaints committees, making procedures less formal and increasing the involvement of the national complaints committees. Also, complaints committees can put up barriers by means of mediation and referrals, so that complaints are more often solved at a school level. In addition, national organizations such as the Ministry of Education, the board organizations, and the parents' organizations should play an important part in improving the ways in which complaints are dealt with. The research shows that schools and complaints committees are of the opinion that they get too little money to deal with complaints. Schools are compensated when they join a complaints committee, but they do not get money for the preliminary stages. Therefore, schools are not stimulated to prevent complaints. Apart from cost, the formal position of complaints committees should be taken into consideration: especially the position of the complaints committee compared with other bodies, such as the school's inspectorate and the Public Prosecutor, is still too vague. The board organizations can play an important part in providing boards, school management, and mediators with information and training. Finally, parents' organizations could investigate how their members regard the effects of the complaints regulations.

Notes

1 Kamerstuk 25459 no. 3, session 1996-1997.
2 Kamerstuk 24248, 14 July 1995, session 1994-1995.
3 Permanent Committee for Education, Science, and Cultural Affairs, memorandum discussion report, 2 October 1995.
4 Kamerstuk 24248, 14 July 1995, session 1994-1995.
5 Kamerstuk 25459 no. 3, session 1996-1997.
6 Parliamentary Document 25459 no. 3, session 1996-1997.

Section 2

Schools’ perspectives on collaboration with families and community

Changing responsibilities between home and school. Consequences for the pedagogical professionality of teachers

Cees A. Klaassen & Frederik Smit

The pedagogical task of the school

In the present social and educational debate on pedagogy, the moral task of the school, and the division of labor between home and school, it is often stated that parents, teachers and other socializing agencies in the community have shared responsibility for the education of the younger generation. The development of values, norms and citizenship has been high on the political and education agendas in the recent past. It is currently expected that education contribute to the necessary 'restoration' of values and norms in society by attending to moral education and creating a good pedagogical school climate and teachers functioning as a moral role model. It is sometimes pointed out that teaching is more than simply a profession, it is a calling (Hansen, 1995). Publications on the pedagogical assignment of the school clearly indicate that it is not only different tasks to be performed but also the possession and presentation of certain personality characteristics and even visible 'virtues'. They also point to the fact that school, family and community should work together in nurturing and educating the youngsters. In the Netherlands the most important Advise Committee of the Government has been used, the African proverb, 'It takes the whole village to raise a child', to bolster arguments for greater cooperation between the families, school and community. While overused, the proverb does express the intent of a family/school/community partnership'. The partnerships are based on the notion that everyone is responsible for the education of the children, and by working together, all children will have a better chance to be successful. In the partnerships, the resources, or 'energies' of the various stakeholders are aligned so everyone is making a contribution to the common goal of learning. However, for the 'whole village' to be involved requires a concerted, sustained, collaborative effort. Family/school/community partnerships don't just happen. They need to be planned, formed, and cultivated (Smit & Van Esch, 1993; Lueder 1998; Burke & Picus, 2001).

School, family and community must form a partnership. A parents-school-community partnership is a collaborative relationship between parents, school and community designed primarily to produce positive educational and social effects on the child, while being mutually beneficial to all other parties involved. The concept of these partnerships is more far-reaching and complex than such interactions as home-school relations. These kind of partnerships where we are talking about are more process based on a collaborative and helping attitude and belief system than a product. They are 'environments' for people to help each other. A parents-school-community partnership offers the parties involved the opportunity to effectively play their individual roles and fulfil their responsibilities (Epstein e.o. 1997; Lueder, 1998). In the educational and political debate on the moral or pedagogical function of education one can also hear another

point of view. For instance a school leader of a high school in the Netherlands wrote in a regional newspaper that schools should stick to their main and primary task. He said: 'a growing number of parents disclaim too much responsibility for the nurturing of their children and ask the school to take over this task. They can ask the school to teach their children a classical language, but they themselves must contribute to the learning of values and norms, Some time ago I had a discussion with parents who told me without blushing that they really did not have enough time to do that'. Obviously, there are also teachers who do not consider the pedagogical assignment to be part of their task. The statement 'I am teacher and not a therapist or a social worker' clearly illustrates this in a slightly exaggerated manner. In light of these considerations, it is the pedagogical dimension of the professionality of teachers that is in need of extra attention. Empirically, relatively little is known about this. In the present article, the following questions will be considered: What does the current pedagogical assignment mean for the opinions and task performance of teachers? How do they conceive their moral role?

The social processes as secularisation, individualization, value fragmentation, and the increased multicultural character of many societies constitute an important reason for devoting greater attention to the moral development of the youngsters and tot the attunement of home, school and community (Klaassen, 1996). Parents and children, teachers and students can no longer simply follow familiar paths; they are involved, rather, in negotiation processes that require space for everyone's definition of the situation. Continual reflection and discussion of norms and values have become a critical necessity for parents, teachers and students. The general goal of education in this respect is to instill the specific pedagogical guidance and points of concern pertaining to the personal development and well-being of the student. This educational approach assumes, in contrast, that schooling is an inherently moral activity and that children are constantly learning and expanding their social values at school. Through constant moral education, children learn how they are expected to act as students and citizens. The pedagogical task is not reduced within this approach to the learning of morals but conceptualized more broadly and in keeping with the original meaning of the word 'pedagogical'. This means the provision of help and guidance for young people on the way to adulthood and a proper role in society. This all occurs thus not only in reaction to a societal concern about the blurring and decline of norms but also as a result of a pedagogical concern for the guidance of young people on their way to adulthood and adequate fulfillment of their role in society. Greater attention in education to norms and values and the communication of values can support and stimulate students in their more or less permanent search, which is the formation of an identity. In addition to explicit attention to questions of identity and life meaning, the stimulation of social responsibility and care for each other can also be undertaken as part of everyday school practice.

In loco parentis: the teacher between home, school and community

Child rearing is not limited to just the family. In the discussion of the pedagogical task of the school, considerable importance is attached to the specific role of the teacher. The teacher is expected to fulfil an exemplary function and represent numerous virtues (Tom, 1984). Pedagogical thoughtfulness is an important characteristic of teacher professionalism (van Manen, 1991). In his book, *The Call to Teach* (1995), David Hansen also assumes certain virtues to be a necessity on the part of the teacher. To describe the 'call to teach', Hansen uses such terms as 'faith, moral imperative, integrity, civility, right, wrong, discipline, caring, empathy'. Parents and school must work together to raise moral children. Parents should view the school as a partner in the tasks of child rearing

and education and, in fact, plenty is known about how and why parents get involved in their children's education. Empirical research into particularly effective schools, for example, has clearly shown parental involvement to create positive outcomes for the children. All of this has fostered greater attention to the influence of parents and then in the areas of values and norms as well. In numerous publications, it is noted that the family has primary responsibility for the instillation of values and norms. Parents have the inalienable right and obligation to raise their children. The school and teachers have a derived function or responsibility. They perform their task *for* the parents. In order for parents and schools to jointly influence the personal development and moral education of students, however, they should clearly be oriented in the same direction. By this, we mean that a certain degree of attunement and cooperation should exist for the shared pedagogical enterprise to possibly succeed. Such cooperation or attunement can be seen as not self-evident when one recognizes that parents and school can also oppose or neutralize each other's influence. Congruent operation and the strengthening - per definition - of each other's influence need not be the case. In many discussions of the moral task of the school, it is simply not recognized that parents need not constitute a single like-minded group. In fact, one can rarely speak of 'parents' as single, undifferentiated category (Munn, 1993). General statements and recommendations must often, thus, be refined when it comes to the social characteristics of the parents, different circumstances, and specific schools. What is also often overlooked is the fact that opinions on the parent-school-community relation and the responsibilities of the various parties can vary considerably. Nevertheless, almost everyone considers cooperation between parents, school and community to be critical and research into the prerequisites for effective cooperation is therefore called for. Research in the field of education for instance could pay attention to the moral and pedagogical professionality of teachers. This professionality should receive expression in their behavior. It is the goal of this paper to elaborate on the empirical evidence of the opinions of teachers with regard to the parents-school-community partnership and their moral role.

The pedagogical professionality of elementary and high school teachers

The pedagogical assignment is considered an important component of the professionality of the teacher both by parents and teachers. Under professionality, the system of teacher opinions on just what constitutes qualitatively good teaching and how this should be realized is understood. These opinions relate to not only the primary teaching process or the micro- level but also encompass the meso- and macro-levels (Van Veen et al, 2001). A common assumption in teacher behavior studies is that teacher opinions have a strong influence upon teacher behavior (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Such content-related and normative opinions regarding good teaching not only steer the behavior of teachers but can also legitimize their behavior at times. What do the teachers themselves think? This question can only be answered with empirical research. In different studies over the past few years, we have examined the opinions of teachers in this domain. Both elementary and high school teachers have been studied. And in almost all of the research reported here, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods has been used[1]. The results of a 1997 study of the degree of attunement between the school and the home with respect to the pedagogical assignment among Dutch parents and teachers showed parents and teachers to be of the opinion that the elementary school teacher has a formative task in addition to a teaching task. Parents and teachers see the pedagogical assignment as an important component of the task of the elementary school teacher, and the pedagogical assignment is not in conflict with the school as knowledge institute. Elementary school teachers consider themselves not only professionals in the area of knowledge and skills but also in the domain of value

formation. These teachers are generally of the opinion that they have a better perspective on the development of children as a result of years of experience than parents. The teachers, themselves, also consider themselves to be joint child raisers.

Parents and teachers are of the opinion that the teacher has a formative task in addition to a teaching task. Teachers are always viewed as formative teachers. In the words of one teacher: '*You cannot teach without attention to the formative aspect as well... Teachers who only teach have problems keeping order in the class.*' Concerning the primary school teacher as moral role model both teachers and parents agree that teachers must provide a 'good example' by, for instance, sticking to agreements and observing the rules of etiquette. Both parents and teachers consider it important that the teacher present him/herself as a 'man of flesh and blood' with both strengths and weaknesses. According to both parents and teachers, it is pedagogically desirable to show the 'person' behind the teacher. They want to underscore the relevance of the person who occupies the role. One parent says**:** '*I didn't hire a robot. I want people to interact with my children. They are, after all, at school for a very large part of the day.*' Collaboration is the concept that underlies a parents-school-community partnership. The collaborative relationships are formed on the assumption that education is a shared responsibility and that all partners are 'equal' players. 'Equal' in this case, means that each partner contributes in major ways to the success of young people, and that everyone has a say in determining the path to the common goal of learning (Lueder, 1998). That means creating two-way communications, enhancing learning at home and at school, providing mutual support and making joint decisions.

Many parents and teachers are nevertheless of the opinion that pure teaching is the most important task of the school and that the responsibility for child rearing lies first and foremost with the parents. '*The teaching is still your primary task ... I want the children to have mastered that package after 8 years so that they can go further. One should connect up with the things that happen, consider conflicts but not react to every conflict with: we have to talk about this.*' One teacher put it as follows: '*The basis lies at home. And at a certain point, things come to an end at school; cause you are the teacher and something has to be learned. And I think that the learning is most important. You sometimes have groups of children in which too much time goes into child-rearing behaviors. And then you say: that's enough, we're going to do math 'cause something still has to be learned.*' A number of teachers still think that their tasks have gradually shifted over the course of time from teaching to the rearing of children. They point out that parents have less time than earlier for the rearing of their children. *'I think that it is being shifted more and more to the school, also by the parents. I sometimes see that in the morning. Such a parent shoves her child inside: he's in a bad mood, have fun. A conflict has already occurred at home and that's how you start the day. I have troubles with this. It is simply shifting the problems that have not been talked out at home to the school. Parents simply have no time for this.'*

In a qualitative study of 15 high school teachers involving in-depth interviews we explored some further details of the result of a preceding quantitative research project. Some of these teachers we interviewed had very explicit opinions with regard to their pedagogical assignment. *I have always seen this as part of my task. I would almost say that it is almost always your main task. This has nothing to do with the subject matter in my eyes. Yeah, my job is to teach, to interact with kids.* According to a different teacher: *I think that the development of values and norms is equally important as conveying the relevant subject matter, it's all part of the package. The one is no more valuable than the other,* in the opinion of another teacher. *You try to make your students more complete people in any case, and this has to do with your particular subject. I mean, that's what you are doing here in this school.*

While teachers generally consider the pedagogical assignment to be part of their task, they emphasize different aspects. Some are very conscious of the fact that they transfer norms and values or, in any case, attempt to stimulate the development of these in their students. Others emphasize their task as the pedagogical guide of students and student learning processes. The pedagogical and didactic aspects of their task are viewed as closely connected by a number of the interviewed teachers). Teaching has everything to do with values and norms. One teacher states that as the group gets smaller, the influence of exemplary behavior gets larger and, in light of developments towards more guided instruction, the influence of exemplary behavior will only grow. This teacher sees the normative aspect of teaching as '*almost the main task*'.

How a teacher relates to individual students and their parents is critical for building a supportive and nurturing environment fort students' academic success (Schmitt & Tracy, 1996). There is no doubt that the relation between parents and schools have changed the last ten years and have influenced commitment to the concept of a 'school that learns' with parents. Inspired by the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1986) researchers emphasize the cooperation and complementarities of schools and families, and encourages communication and collaboration between the two institutions (Deslandes, 2001). A school can provide the 'open forum' for learning activities and become the place where the community can find a voice (Senge, 2000), particularly where parents can be heard (McGilp, 2001)

Unfortunately, most teacher preparation programs provide only limited training to teachers in how to approach, educate and support parents and community volunteers. Empowered and well-informed parents are often active supporters of their school's administration, working to help solve problems, make policy, or raise additional funds for the school. When a student does not have a parents available to support his or her academic needs, community volunteers can be instrumental in providing academic mentorschip and assistance. Community volunteers include students form other grades, college students, community members, parents of children in other grade levels, and employees form local companies. To successfully use community volunteers, it is important for a school to have a appropriate policies and procedures that support community volunteer programs (Smit & Van Esch, 1996; Burke & Picus, 2001).

Note

1 In the elementary school research project, the similarities and differences in the opinions of parents and teachers with regard to pedagogy and the division of child-rearing tasks across home and school were examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. A questionnaire was completed by 275 parents and 53 teachers in six elementary schools to inventory the opinions of parents and teachers with regard to pedagogical issues/objectives and the relations between parents and teachers; interviews were held with 48 parents and 36 teachers to gain greater insight into their respective viewpoints; and panel discussions were undertaken with parents and teachers to identify alternative solutions for the differences in opinion and child-rearing practices (see Klaassen & Leeferink, 1999).

In the high school project a number of 452 teachers were approached by way of a written questionnaire (see Theunissen et al, 1998) and a selection of 15 teachers was invited to participate in a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews. In this paper we only present the results of the qualitative study (Klaassen et al, 1999).

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Home-school relationships in one Russian school. A case study

Andrea Laczik

Abstract
This paper summarizes the preliminary results of a study of home-school relations in Perm, Russia. The study was closely linked with the Tempus Tacis Project, which developed good working relationships with the Perm State Pedagogical University (PSPU). These links opened the door to an investigation of home-school relationships, an area of growing importance within education. This case study is the first part of an international comparative study on home-school relationships in Russia and Hungary. This paper is focusing on Russia, and highlights the teacher's perspective on home-school relationships. It offers some examples of the different fora and patterns of interaction between the home and the school in one primary school in Perm. The study investigates the existing home-school relationships and looks into modes of interaction between the teacher and the parents. It points not only to similarities in the thinking and practice of teachers but highlights differences in the intensity of communication. The paper focuses on issues that emerged during the preparation and execution of the study. It briefly examines methodological issues of the research. This is followed by the main part that deals with teacher's perspectives and activities in the field of home-school relations. The paper concludes in pointing towards issues that will be pursued at a later stage of the research project.

Introduction
The research was conducted as one part of a comparative study of home-school relationships of Hungary and Russia. The study is closely linked with a Tempus Tacis Project. As a project member I had visited Perm, Russia twice before I started to investigate the relationships between home and school. The Tempus Project allowed me to explore already existing links and relationships with the Perm State Pedagogical University and its 'pilot' schools. During previous visits to Perm, the Tempus pilot schools introduced me to Russian schools, their organization, the circumstances they have to work in, staff and school life in general.

Focus
Looking at the issue of home-school relationships, it seemed necessary to clarify its meaning within the given context. I was able to use the contemporary debate in Russian publications to gain an initial understanding of the topic. Home-school relations, however, need active involvement of all parties, which is why I decided to investigate different angles on this subject. Interviews on parental choice expressed a variety of views on the issue. There seemed to be a common understanding that teachers provide an important part within home-school relations. I therefore was seeking to investigate teacher's perspectives and views on communication between the home and the school. The following questions were used as a structural device to guide the researcher through the process of investigation.

- What is the understanding of home-school relationships from the teacher's perspective?

- What are some of the examples of the different fora and patterns of interaction between the home and the school?

These questions reflect the main direction of the interview schedule and influenced the selection of documentary sources for the study. Within the following, an overview of methodological issues will be given.

Methodology

Last year I spent two weeks in Perm to collect data focusing on home-school relationships in one of the Tempus Tacis Pilot Schools investigating teachers' perspectives on home-school relationships and their practice concerning communication with the family. As my research had an exploratory aim, a qualitative approach and research design was developed to reflect this. The main data collection method was semi-structured interviews, but as supplementary data source I also used documentary evidence, observation and field notes (Yin, 1994). I interviewed 14 out of 25 primary school class teachers, two psychologists, the social pedagogue and a deputy head. All of my interviewees were female and the interviews lasted between 25-40 minutes.

During interviewing an interpreter was present to help with the language although simultaneous translation was rarely done, as I have a good passive knowledge of Russian. The questions were always asked in English allowing the interpreter to translate, to avoid misunderstanding but the answers were translated only in case of a need for clarification. The interpreters were students of PSPU in their final year and studying translation and interpretation skills as special interest. Stress was put on discussing the aim of the research with them and getting to know them before they got engaged in the work. This was essential in order to minimize possible misunderstanding of educational jargon as well as introducing them to the research in which they would play a vital role. In addition to helping with the language the interpreters also provided useful information about the culture, and about the Russian way of thinking. Using interpreters raises questions as to the extent to which interpreters interfere with the process of the interview, but far more they drew attention towards issues of professional language skills versus contextual understanding of the interpreter.

The school

The school, which accommodated my research can be characterized as a 'typical' Russian primary school in Perm, yet with unique qualities. It is a state school with a non-selective admission policy for children between the ages of 6 and 10 and as such does not charge tuition fees. The pupils come from different backgrounds, and their families differ in their financial situation, in parents' schooling, in the family structure and so on. The school caters for all abilities, including classes for able children and compensatory classes for slow learners. The school has a highly qualified and committed teaching staff. They are supported and advised by a social pedagogue and psychologists, who, despite economic, social and political difficulties in the last few years, have stayed in the profession.

The student body numbers 625 children in 25 classes. There are 48 teaching staff working in the school. They are all women except for three male teachers. The teaching staff include the school head, the deputy head for upbringing, the deputy head for educational methods, 24 class teachers, four retired teachers, school psychologists, the aforementioned social pedagogue and specialized teachers, for example for PE, IT and language teaching. Because of the high number of children and the limited size of the school, children go to school in two shifts. Each shift has six 35-minute lessons. The first starts at 8.30 a.m. and finishes at 12.55 p.m.; the afternoon shift lasts from 1.15 to 5.40 p.m.

The school educates children for their first three or four years at school. Few of its classes follow a four-year primary compensatory education

programme (traditional programme), the majority of classes work according to a three-year developing education programme. Most of the class teachers are involved in voluntary experimental work led by PSPU academics. Within these initiatives teachers are free to develop their own teaching programme in addition to the national curriculum. Teachers can choose to develop areas of special interest for their class such as drama, health and art. At the same time the school has to deal with real financial limitations. It must very often rely on the generosity of wealthy parents who offer the school financial help in purchasing textbooks for their children's classes. As a result of the school's good reputation and its programmes for developing education, parents from other school districts are interested in sending their children there.

Some of the school's unique features made it easier for me to conduct the research. First, the school is one of the Tempus-Tacis (Technical Aid Programme) pilot schools. This means that apart from accommodating regular foreign visits, it allows and welcomes researchers and, where it can, makes the most of these. The school head and a few of the staff traveled to Western Europe within the Tempus Project, where they visited schools, LEAs and university departments. These visits add to the good reputation of the school and through the experience gained abroad it has an impact on teachers' thinking and practice. Secondly, the school built up a very close link with Perm State Pedagogical University, its teaching staff and researchers. The school and the majority of the staff are involved in experimental work stemming from the university. Thirdly, the school is located in a residential area close to the city center and offers easy access for national and international delegations to visit the school. This has also a positive effect on the allocation of resources from the city council. Fourthly, within the school's catchment area there are no opportunities for children to attend clubs and societies, e.g. there are no sports facilities and no House of Culture nearby. For the school this means providing different after-school activities according to interest to occupy children during their free time. This puts the school under considerable pressure. For these reasons the school has built up good working relationships with outside agencies, for instance, with the swimming pool, puppet theatre, museums, hospitals, etc. The school itself commented on this as a special feature, unusual in the Russian context, suggesting that other schools do not have to deal with this type of problem.

This school was selected for the study, because all the qualities described above paved the way to a successful research endeavor. Another important element in choosing this school was that during previous visits I already established good personal contacts with the school head and some of the school staff. This certainly helped when gaining access, since I only had limited time for the fieldwork.

Findings

The review of Russian periodicals such as *Nachalnaja Shkola* and *Director Shkoli* suggested a heightened awareness of effective communication on good home-school relationships (Manisheva, 2000; Orlova, 1998; Alexeeva, 1997). It seemed, therefore of interest to investigate the view of teachers as active participants on this issue. The research centered around two main questions, answers to which are investigated in turns.

What is the understanding of home-school relationships in School A from the teacher's perspective?

The interview questions on this issue targeted the class teachers' practice and thinking, findings are based on teachers' reporting. Several teachers described home-school relationships as a co-operation between the school and the family, as one teacher pointed out: 'We have to work together, the teacher, parents and pupils.' Although this is a broad definition for the

terminology, it helps to identify relevant examples of home-school relationships. These include parental involvement in educational issues, such as homework and grades; others are connected with free time or social activities, like school trips or celebrations. A wide range of activities involve teachers, parents and children. It is however, interesting to note that teachers have different attitudes and feelings about ways to initiate and maintain the contact with the home. In general they all felt it was important to involve parents and to listen to them. They often praised the advantage of a relaxed relationship with the parents that leads to a happier and better performing child. Teachers emphasized that:

> If the child sees that his/her parents take part in school celebrations, different events, they get on well with the teacher; it is already a pleasant experience. The children consider it as something good and it reduces the 'gap' between the child and the teacher.

> I think that parents should be interested not only in children's learning [...] but also what is happening in the class. The child feels this and his attitude to school gets better.

It was often difficult to separate perspectives and feelings about home-school relationships. Although teachers felt that it was essential to create a warm and friendly atmosphere, they also pointed out that many qualities are needed to achieve this goal. Some mentioned a lack of professional training in this area at university and emphasized that they had to rely on their own practical experience in communicating with parents. Related to this issue were communication barriers such as age, gender, and qualification. They were perceived as initial causes for problems in dealing with parents. Many of the interviewed teachers admitted feeling anxiety before meeting with a group of new parents. This is exemplified in the following quote:

> I am worried how much I will find a mutual agreement with the parents, how much we will have common interest in the child's upbringing. To start with I feel fear but when I get to know parents I feel lucky and even years later I keep in touch with them.

Parents are seen in different roles. During the interviews, the majority of teachers focused on parental assistance with homework. This function was actively targeted by special meetings where teachers instructed parents in how to help their children at home. Although parents are not expected to help within the classroom, they are encouraged to participate in certain curricular and social activities. In one instance I was able to observe a short lesson on dogs. As part of the science lesson, two parents brought their dog into the classroom and talked about their daily routine and habits.

Parents are also encouraged to assist the class teacher, when it comes to organize social, cultural and sport events for the class. It, however, depends on the teacher's style either to initiate or to comply with parents' wishes to organize events themselves.
While discussing parental involvement in class activities, issues arose naturally, which highlighted the complexity of the home-school relationships teachers have to deal with. Comments made by teachers suggest their awareness of a growing gap between poor and rich parents as reflected by changing social circumstances. These were mentioned by teachers because they felt that these had an effect on their everyday practice. Some teachers observed that affluent parents tended to interact with parents from the same background, thereby creating a social division within the class. Parents with lower income were often described as overloaded with work and less able to devote sufficient time to their children, as one teacher pointed out

> Parents have got more problems - not with the school but with life itself. Children have less of parent care, have become less looked after.

As shown, the interviews provided me with information on the different levels of parental involvement in the class's matters, and also touched on other issues, which have an effect on this relationship. It is important to note that teachers have different feelings about working together with parents, which very much depend on their personality, teaching and personal experience. But there are strong similarities in their attitudes towards parents. Teachers showed considerable interest in building up a good relationship with parents, enthusiasm in involving parents, and many of them valued the parents' information about their children. The collected data strongly suggest that the teachers play a leading role in the evolution of home-school relationships in this particular school. Most of the time the teacher is the initiator of contact, trying to involve parents in their children's education and the class's social life. Parents can initiate activities and changes, given that they offer help.

It has to be pointed out that these findings are restricted to the teachers of the school, leaving out other aspects of parental involvement within the school.

Having discussed general issues of teacher's understanding of home-school relationships, I now move on to a more specific area. The following paragraphs illustrate and analyze the interaction between home and school as seen from the teachers' perspectives. The guiding question here was as follows:

What are some of the examples of the different fora and patterns of interaction between the home and the school in School A?

The analysis of interviews and documents suggested a range of different types of interaction between the class teachers and the parents. Part one of this section deals with the interaction during meetings of groups of parents and the class teacher; the second looks at examples of individual interaction between the home and the school.

Examining the data, I found two *fora*, where the class teacher meets a group of parents to inform or discuss whole-class-related issues, namely parental committees and meetings.

A parental committee is set up in every class. It is usually a strong group of parents organizing class celebrations, cultural programmes, class trips. Its activity also includes involving parents who are not very active. The committee has one leader who co-ordinates the activities, involves other parents and keeps close contact with the class teacher. Although the parental committee's main activity is to organize out of school events for children and their families, it can also be responsible for handling the class budget. All class teachers from the school keep close contact with the parental committee but their involvement varies from acknowledging and taking part in social, cultural events to offering ideas and actively taking part in the organization of these events.

Very often the suggestions made by the parental committee and the class teacher are delivered and discussed at the parental meeting by the whole group of parents from the class. The agenda and aim of these meetings might be different in each class and their frequency can be regulated by the teacher as necessary.

> Parental meetings are four times a year. These are the main meetings. But in the first year I organize it more often, if I have some difficulties I can call a parental meeting. But I try not to bother parents. If I need a meeting I ask the children to inform their parents and we meet. They help me. I have a plan, I work according to it. At the parental meetings we never talk about children's upbringing. I talk

> about children to individual parents. Children's progress I also discuss only in private. At parental meetings we talk about general issues. I invite the psychologist, I invite people who make presentations on what are better ways to help and bring up children. How to develop memory, thinking - so I invite people from outside.

As seen in the quote teachers sometimes call for a meeting if they deem it necessary. From interviews it emerges that teachers feel these meetings to be an effective way of transferring information to parents. It has to be pointed out that agenda and style always depend on the individual teacher. Most class teachers discuss whole class related issues during these meetings, such as upcoming social events, visits to the theatre as well as information concerning method of teaching, textbooks, achievements, changing daily routine etc. Class teachers expressed different views on talking about individual achievement, some felt it was acceptable to mention names in a positive context, others rejected the idea of talking about individual children at all. All interviewees seemed to consider very carefully the number and length of meetings not wanting to put parents under unnecessary pressure. As one teacher said:

> I organize regular meetings once a month, which last between one and two hours. Not 100 % attend. Because of different reasons. It's hard to find an appropriate time.

Meetings and committees are but one pattern of interaction between the teacher and the parents. Another way of communicating with parents is written notes. All interviewed class teacher use the school diary ('*dnivnik*') to send messages to parents. These messages have various purposes, they can ask for money for a theatre visit, invite parents to meetings, inform about future events. Some teachers expect parents to reply in this diary or use it for general information flow between teacher and parent.

In the following I will highlight modes of one to one interaction between the teacher and the parents. Often class teachers would want to discuss personal issues with individual parents concerning achievement, learning difficulty, behavior. These meetings can take place in the school or in children's homes. Telephone conversation is widely used to keep in touch with parents and to solve problems. All interviewed teachers had telephone at home and they do not mind if parents contact them with their problems in the evening. In certain situations parents are even encouraged to ring the class teacher at home. Also teachers use the telephone to contact parents. If a parent has not got telephone at home, the parent would be phoned at his/her work place. This practice seem to be generally accepted in the school.
The following quote demonstrates how one teacher employed different methods of communication when dealing with a problematic situation:

> Well, if it is behavior - and there are such cases as well -, if the problem is serious it's better to go and see parents in their home. I have a pupil, this child is completely out of control. He is intelligent and learning, but lacks self control. He had a tragedy in his life before he started school and this affected him very much. And this child on the first day, on the 1st of September, beat everybody. I keep in touch with the mother, we agreed that she would come and see me every week, we exchanged telephone numbers, she would come to see me and we tried to solve the problem.

It seems to be common that parents come to the school and approach the class teacher. At the beginning of the primary school children are seen to the school and parents often take this opportunity to approach the class teacher; asking questions or discussing previous days happenings, behavior and learning issues. Most class teachers let the parents know when they are available for

discussion and when they can be approached before or after the school day.

Home visits are a topic where teachers' views differ considerably. It depends on the class teacher's style and personality. Very few amongst the interviewees conduct regular home visits. Some reject it completely and consider it as an intrusion into privacy. These teachers find other ways to communicate with parents. Some teachers allow for occasional home visits provided there is a 'good reason', but recognize the difficulty.

> This can be inconvenient for the family especially if they have problems - there is an alcoholic in the family or they are in a difficult financial situation. I try to inform them if I want to go and go only to families where there is a problem with the child. For example: I have a child in the class who could achieve better then he does. I tried to ring the parents but no success, so I visited them. Mum got depressed, dad drinks. ... I try to help …

In conclusion, there is lively interaction between the class teachers and parents in the school. They both initiate communication and discuss issues of a personal character, the learning, behavior or health of the children. Teachers, like parents, have their own preferences of using the written or oral form of interaction, which differs from class to class. Whereas clear similarities can be detected in the ways class teachers interact with the parents, examining the teachers' examples it is also clear that every teacher uses different means of communication in different situations. The school diary ('*dnivnik*') is used daily, and it is also supported by the school management. The telephone is generally considered as a quick and efficient way to solve urgent problems, and both the teachers and parents use it. Personal meetings at school are initiated by either the teacher or the parent.

Conclusion

This paper reports the first findings of a research project mainly with the intention to provide information on the follow-up research endeavor. It gives an account of fieldwork undertaken in one primary school in Perm, Russia. It is suggested that teachers and other school staff consider home-school relationships as important and, consequently, they all spend a significant amount of energy and time on improving the relationship between the home and the school. It is also evident that some teachers find it easier to work with parents than others.

Teachers in this school seem to think very similarly about home-school relationships. According to teachers' reporting changing social and economic - city's, school's, family's - circumstances introduce them to new professional challenges within this relationship. Teachers showed an open-minded attitude when dealing with the new situations, although some expressed their wish to receive professional advice on issues related to working with parents.

Although the project was conducted as a single case study and the findings are not directly generalisable to other primary schools in the region, it offers information about the state of home-school relationships with its complexity and difficulty as teachers in the school see it. Keeping this in mind and within the limitations of this research project, the findings can, however, contribute to an understanding of the cultural context and home-school relationships in Russia. The research findings also offer orientation for a planned international study. Not only do they point towards methodological issues that have to be considered, they furthermore offer a framework for the structured investigation of teachers' views on home-school relationships. Another, and equally important, issue is the views of parents. A preliminary investigation into parental choice highlighted some interesting questions, which will be the subject of future

research. At this point, first impressions suggest that parents in the school have relatively clear ideas about their legal rights and clearly defined demands and sources of information on a suitable school for their children.

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Lifelong learning:
schools and the parental contribution in Australia

Jacqueline McGilp

Introduction

Since lifelong learning is a central focus of UNESCO projections, influences school development and the establishment of learning communities and learning cities, and adds to educational debate on policy formation, the contribution of parents to children's learning needs to be further recognized, articulated and actioned. Caldwell (1997: 244) in revisiting projected future trends for education stated, 'The parent role in education will be claimed or reclaimed.'

The term, lifelong learning, needs much discussion for definition. This is because it has been associated mainly with economic advancement, and in many instances, with learning that takes place after compulsory years of schooling. This interpretation is partly true. However, lifelong learning when defined through four pillars - learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be (UNESCO, 1998) - aims for personal fulfillment, social inclusion and economic advancement for all (UNESCO, 1998). Shuping (2000) further sees lifelong learning as 'a hope, a joy, a tool, a right, a responsibility and a challenge' and Palamattan (2000) says its focus is to help us 'dream what life could be and make a masterpiece of it.' Within these definitions one then sees the scope of the intent of lifelong learning. It is the basis for creating a world vision for society. This can be achieved partly through the formation of learning communities within cities, estates, towns and regions (Longworth, 1996).

School leaders must sensitively address lifelong learning perspectives and revisit the question, How do we best involve parents in the learning process of their children? School leaders must not only help parents but also the wider community in decisionmaking for the provision of lifelong learning opportunities for children and families. Schools can achieve more when they are recognized as learning communities and are 'reenergising', 'reinvigorating' and 'remarketing' their structures and processes for learning provision in accordance with lifelong learning emphases (McGilp, 2001).

While some teachers have lacked support and training for the utilization of the parental contribution (Senge, 2000) many others are comfortable in achieving parental partnerships. There are many instances of parents occupying different roles in the formal learning of children (O'Donoghue and Dimmock, 1998). This is because of their professional knowledge, their knowledge and skills attained without formal qualification, their enthusiasm and curiosity, and their organizational skills (McGilp, 1994, 2001). The parental contribution has also resulted from training programs offered by schools (McGilp, 1994, 2001). By contrast to the involved parents, others have regarded themselves as 'educationless' (Senge, 2000) and have demonstrated 'learned helplessness' in regard to assisting their children in formal learning offered by schools. This can result when parents have not been given adequate information and assistance to help their children. When this occurs the parental

contribution is developed from a deficit model and the role of parents, as prime educators, is often overlooked (McGilp, 2001). Any parental program for partnerships must mean parent empowerment and family support (Senge, 2000).

There is no doubt that life and parent circumstances have changed - shifting urban populations, fragmentation of families and different employment arrangements, increased social problems, technological advancement, and increased parental interest in children's learning expectations (McGilp, 2001) - and these have influenced commitment to the concept of a 'school that learns' (Senge, 2000) with parents. A school can provide the 'open forum' for the monitoring and development of lifelong learning activities and become the place where the community can find a voice (Senge, 2000), particularly where parents can be heard (McGilp, 2001).

Successful studies

The following three descriptions illustrate recent, successful studies or programs for the parental contribution for children's lifelong learning in the Australian context. They emphasize family partnerships in relation to understanding of indigenous communities, intervention programs for positive relationships and particular means for making a school 'parent friendly'. The importance of listening to and gaining shared meaning from these illustrations can assist the ongoing learning of teachers and parents.

A study to determine the influence of the cultural context and content on children's learning as seen by indigenous people is described by Fleer and Williams-Kennedy (2001). This research project was undertaken by the Australia Early Childhood Association and funded through the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. The researchers invited indigenous preschool aged children and their families from different regions of Australia to participate and sought to identify learning experiences of children prior to school experiences. Videotapes, showing preschool-aged children's learning, were made by their respective families. Taping took place at home, in the community and in preschool, undertaking normal everyday activities (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001). 'A major aim of this project was to provide indigenous families with an opportunity to act as central agents, selecting those valued cultural skills and knowledge exhibited by their young children' (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001:52). 'Each family selected from the hours of video-tape those aspects of their child's life which best represented to non-indigenous people important aspects of being an indigenous child in Australia today' (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001:52). In discussion of the videotapes three guiding questions were explored: What can everyone see? What can only the family see? What can we no longer see because it is so much a part of our lives? (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001:52).

Two major outcomes identified by Fleer and Williams-Kennedy (2001:52) were:

- moving the discourse from parent participation to family partnerships; and
- listening for the connections between people. For example, when assumptions about the primary caregiver in families by non-indigenous teachers is made, these can lead to exclusion rather than participation by family members.

  Who in the family is a significant caregiver? Who introduces the child into the environment? The significant caregiver may be a grandmother, aunt, or close relative other than the child's birth parents. Sometimes older siblings look after the younger kids (Denise as cited by Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001: 53).

'Thinking about 'family' partnerships rather than 'parent' participation is a mind set that is needed if schools are to be more inclusive of the voice of families' (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001:53).

Fleer and Williams-Kennedy (2001:54) state 'Active listening was important in the study. This involves not just hearing what is said, but watching closely the non-verbal language and providing space and time for this communication to take place. The families in this study spoke about the need to make connections between people and places and family':

> *Sometimes we don't know the kid's name, but we all know the family - that's so and so, you don't need the name, but you need the connection. But as a teacher you need the name for the roll* (Denise as cited by Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001:54).

In the study Fleer and Williams-Kennedy (2001) stress that connectedness is expected as a two-way process and teachers need to reciprocate and share their family connections and places of origin. 'It is important in some indigenous communities for these protocols to be observed before any meaningful partnership can take place' (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001:54). This study illustrates how active listening by teachers can help to reframe 'traditional school-community relations to be more culturally responsive, to interrupt the norms and to build relationships on Indigenous rather than western terms' (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy, 2001:54).

While the previous description of a parental involvement study relates to understanding of indigenous communities, an emphasis for lifelong learning according to the pillar of learning to live together (UNESCO, 1998) the following description of the Triple P also emphasizes relationships. The case is also situated within the pillars of learning to know and learning to do (UNESCO, 1998).

McTaggart and Sanders (2001) describe The Triple P- Positive Parenting Program as a transition to school strategy for the Australian context. They see the need for programs that aim to equip parents with the skills to maintain good relationships with their children, and to manage misbehavior.

Triple P is a multilevel, prevention program which 'aims to address severe behavioral, emotional and developmental problems in children by intervening early and providing parenting with the skills needed (McTaggart and Sanders, 2001:61). The program does not solely target at-risk children or families. 'Triple P is promoted as a program for every family as a way of improving general parenting skills' (McTaggart and Sanders, 2001:62). McTaggart and Sanders (2001:61) state that the program involves:

- enhancing the knowledge of parents about the causes of children's misbehavior;
- providing skills on developing positive relationships with children (e.g. praise of good behavior);
- providing skills on the consistent management of misbehavior (e.g. planned ignoring, quiet time, time out); and
- learning how to plan for and prevent future problems (e.g. how to take children on a long car trip).

'The findings across a number of different settings have demonstrated that Triple P produces predictable decreases in child behavior problems, which are maintained well across time'; also it is 'an effective method of parent training' (Sanders, 1999 as cited by McTaggart and Sanders, 2001:61).

The Triple P Program is available at five levels (McTaggart and Sanders, 2001:61):

- *Level 1 interventions* involve the provision of information to parents as a low cost intervention (such as getting children to do homework);
- *Level 2 interventions* combine the use of the above mentioned information with minimal professional support to families. For example, at this level teachers or guidance staff may provide;

- *Level 3 interventions* provide families with more than just information but also active skills training on their specific concerns to complement the written material;
- *Level 4 interventions* provide parents with skills training to assist them in managing behavior of all family members in all situations; and
- *Level 5 interventions* provide assistance to families where the problem extends beyond the parent-child interaction.

Extending the Triple P is 'Transition to School Project'. The program is designed to normalize parent training to promote the successful transition of children to school and to reduce disruptive behavior problems in the school environment (McTaggart and Sanders, 2001). The Transition to School Program has involved 25 State Schools in Brisbane, Queensland, however, as yet findings are not available (McTaggart and Sanders, 2001).

> A third interesting parent venture in the Australian context is the development of the Parent Friendly School Program. Tonkin (2001), as principal, describes the school within her charge develops as it develops as a 'VicParenting – Parent Friendly School'. The components of such include developing a family friendly environment, establishing a resource service, providing parenting programs and training school personnel in parent consultation. Tonkin (2001:63) says, 'We were one of twenty three schools across the state involved in this trial. Our story is similar to most schools but it is also unique to us as all schools were left to plan their own changes.'

Prior to this decision to become a VicParenting school Tonkin (2001) described her school as strongly parent welcoming. 'We had parents involved in classroom activities on a regular basis, we had an active School Board, Parent and Teacher Association, a play group or two using the school hall twice a week, and parents involved in various programs around the school' (Tonkin, 2001:61).

A focus of VicParenting is that it locates parent support in schools. This normalizes parenting support and help seeking, thus it enhances the school's capacity to actively support parents in developing parenting practices known to be associated with optimal development of children. It influences the development of structures, policies and practices that promote parent involvement and collaborative teacher-parent relationships and strengthens community partnerships (Tonkin, 2001).

Vic-Parenting assisted Tonkin's school to form a steering committee for interpreting and realizing the four emphases of the program. The school environment is now changed in many ways (Tonkin, 2001). The school corridors are transformed into friendly meeting areas. Crèche support is provided by means of roster timetabling for parent supervision. A three-way conference reporting process is in operation. Skill and expert information sheets are sent to parents. Parents are frequent guest speakers and skill demonstrators in classrooms. Also play groups have been established for parental support with twice each week preschoolers and their parents gathering to play, talk and share hospitality in the school facilities. The school also conducts a resource centre and a library service for parent borrowing operates, together with availability of computer access to recommended websites. Parents have a designated news section on the school noticeboard where resources available in the area are publicized. The school also offers parenting programs on general topics to assist all parents of children (Tonkin, 2001). 'Conversations' replace the title of parenting courses to emphasize equality. 'Every participant has something to offer, a point of view to be explored and to be listened to. A conversation is not about experts with all the answers, nor does it imply that it is for 'bad parents only' (Tonkin,

2001:65). 'It is friendly, welcoming and inclusive. A first conversation takes place in the morning session and the repeat in the evening. This takes into consideration working parents and provides opportunities for both parents to attend' (Tonkin, 2001:65). The conversations are lead by a parenting support person from Centacare (a provider of services for parents), not by the school. The VicParenting initiative also supports the skill development of teachers to 'a level of awareness and competency when parents ask for support or advice' (Tonkin, 2001:65).

The VicParenting program has assisted Tonkin (2001) to make a school 'family friendly' and to invite parents to be more active at whatever level they can in the school. The school reciprocates this support by offering parent support. While it is acknowledged that many schools do similar things to those described by Tonkin (2001) the VicParenting initiative has supplied the foci for the decisionmaking for improved liaison and partnership with parents. Tonkin (2001:64) states, 'From the moment of inquiry we are there to support parents in the marvelous job they do in raising children.'

As communities of learning develop and schools provide opportunities such as the three described in the Australian context, teachers will be further called upon to assist parents in considering lifelong learning opportunities for children's development. The call is not for preoccupation with changing parents' attitudes or selling our approaches to lifelong learning, rather, it is one of listening and understanding children's learning from the parents' perspectives. Teachers must inquire from parents and welcome inquiries from parents (McGilp, 2001). It is through listening and dialogue that lifelong learning for children will be better understood and activated (McGilp, 2001).

Some means for the promotion of parental partnerships have been identified: to revisit and refine school policies and guiding principles, to invite engagement through larger teams, to develop representative committees at the local level, to use a broad range of people on sub-committees; to replace controlled activity with experimentation; and, to provide shared learning opportunities and additional learning opportunities for whole families (Chapman and Aspin, 1997 as cited by McGilp, 2001). These strategies help to increase awareness and connectedness between parents and teachers in the learning community.

Making parents equal with teachers in the choice and direction of the educational experiences and activities being offered to and determined for their children (Senge, 2000) is one definition of partnership. It is certainly a challenging one. Partnerships with parents can assist children to take control of their lives, can increase communication of high expectations, and help children to work for their future. Parents and teachers can assist the reversal of a less meaningful lifestyle in which some children's families are caught. Partnerships between parents and teachers can lead to them providing a mutual support system for lifelong learning. This means parents need to know and understand innovations in content and current changes in approaches to teaching and learning (Senge, 2000). Parents need to gain understanding and competence in formal learning in order to assist their children at school (Senge, 2000). Parents might need to undertake courses to be familiar with recent developments in learning. A crucial component for partnership development is active co-operation between teachers and parents.

Promotion of lifelong learning

Ten principles for the promotion of lifelong learning through active cooperation between teachers and parents are:

- Recognition that the family has equal importance with the school as a place where lifelong learning can be instituted and protracted;

- Clarification of conditions on a school's openness and accessibility to other groups of people;
- Modeling of lifelong learning by schools;
- Development of greater lifelong learning opportunities offered by school communities;
- Generation of different agendas of time and conditions for lifelong learning;
- Utilization of the school as a 'one-stop shop' where people could go and identify things they might want to learn about or courses;
- Enhancement of teachers' and parents' efficacy through the development of lifelong learning opportunities for both;
- Acknowledgement of present boundaries and moving beyond these to a school being a community resource;
- Acceptance of help, advice and resources from cultural, ethnic and religious organizations in the community that themselves have a strong part to play in promoting lifelong learning; and
- Enrichment of community life by networks of lifelong learning.
  (Adapted from Senge, 2000 and Chapman and Aspin, 1997 as cited by McGilp, 2001).

While some of these principles mean the revisiting of existing emphases, consideration of new means for advancement in parental partnerships is essential. Perhaps the answer to different means of operation is dependent on the leadership portrayed. Leadership styles for the promotion of lifelong learning and for the further development of the parental contribution are those that are based on a service philosophy, invitational approaches and collaborative agreements (McGilp, 2001). However, this means that leaders must be aware of parental expertise and challenges and work towards synergy in partnerships which will give children a sound grounding in lifelong learning. Isolated experiences of learning can be 'jigsawed' into integrated, lifelong learning through partnerships with parents (McGilp, 2001). One of the challenges for school leaders today is to emphasize the value of lifelong learning experiences for children rather than perhaps concentrating on early specialization which seem to feature strongly today because of unpredictable employment opportunities (McGilp, 2001).

The following means, some of which are identifiable in the three specific foci for advancing the parental contribution in the Australian context - family partnership in indigenous communities and the Triple P and the VicParenting programs - are worth revisiting for they are reminders and assistance for leaders in promoting lifelong learning and partnerships with parents:

- declaring the vision for lifelong learning by UNESCO (1998);
- promoting values for lifelong learning-trust, openness, honesty, integrity;
- encouraging ownership of lifelong learning and practice (McGilp, 1999, 1997);
- journeying with others (Kouzes and Posner, 1999) in the lifelong learning process;
- exploring, discovering and actioning leadership opportunity (Binney and Williams, 1997) and developing leaders (Conger, 1999) through liberating the leader in each lifelong learner;
- activating continual regeneration, renewed commitment and consequent ownership of the parental contribution (Fullan, 2000);
- facilitating roles for parents to be opportunists, advocates, partners, communicators and motivators in lifelong learning for children;
- allocating time for reflection and scrutiny of practice (Koch,1999; Kouzes and Posner, 1999) for lifelong learning.

Conclusion

In this time of emphasis on lifelong learning, it is important to share understanding of lifelong learning and the actioning of studies and projects which enhance its realization. Many of these demonstrate the building of parental partnerships with schools. However, these are dependent on the demonstration of goodwill and perseverance by both teachers and parents. Schools developing as learning communities can assist understanding

of lifelong learning and provision of different learning opportunities; also the development of parental partnerships. Teachers and parents must be proactive and lead the actioning of the life dimension of learning.

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Increasing social capital: teachers about school-family-community partnerships

Results of a study on the orientations of American and Polish teachers

Maria Mendel

The progress of human civilization is going through partner relationships between school, family, and community. I mean the progress that is visualized in the skills of people to organize themselves, e.g., make the groups and solve the problems together on a basis of the individual abilities that are increased in a supportive group. The idea of people organizing themselves is not new in the social sciences. Since late 80's it is perceived (after sociology of the economical development) as a concept of social capital. Basing on an analogy between material and human capital - tools and people who are educated to use them for better results, social capital concerns the features of social organization such as social networks, norms, credence, and trust[1].

Researchers link school, family, and community partnerships with the importance of social capital. As Joyce L. Epstein stated '*Social capital is increased when well-designed partnerships enable families, educators, students, and others in the community to interact in productive ways. Social capital may be spent, invested, or reinvested in social contacts or in activities that assist students' learning and development, strengthen families, improve schools, or enrich communities*'[2]. In line with this view we may say that teachers become the key figures in increasing social capital. Their approach to the issue of school-family-community collaboration influences the quality of relationships between potential partners and it appears most significant in the creation of partnerships through the everyday activities[3].

In order to prove the statements above a comparative study of the orientations of American and Polish prospective teachers were conducted in December 2000 and February 2001. 'Orientation' is meant here as a generalized, not necessarily fully recognized by the subject, set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies - the term used after Marek Ziolkowski[4].

The research goals are based on the idea of critical reflection about the experiences of the others due to the need of improving our own performance. The Americans are *the others* here. Their achievement on the educational partnership is extraordinarily extensive and interesting. This confirms the author's study at the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, in the fall of the year 2000. Following this study the book was completed and published in September 2001[5]. In addition to the study report the volume consist of many contemporary American concepts on community, especially multicultural education and school, family, and community partnerships, that may become inspiring for Polish readers.

In a frame of this text I will present briefly methodological points and findings, in which most significant conclusions concerning

prospective tendencies on increasing social capital will be distinguished[6].

Methodological points

The problem of the study may be presented as following questions:

- How are prospective teachers of American and Polish schools oriented about their future collaboration with parents?
- What are the constellations of their beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors concerning this part of social reality? These constellations could be perceived as a matrix of knowledge and thinking about school, family, and community partnerships.
- Are the maps of prospective teachers' orientations overlapping? Are there more similarities than differences, which will be perceived in independence to the academic learning systems, presented in the involved countries?
- Which aspects of their orientations will appear useful to build partnerships in the time of transformation, post-totalitarian Polish reality?
- How to use research findings in a process of preparation of teachers to active home, school, and community partnerships?

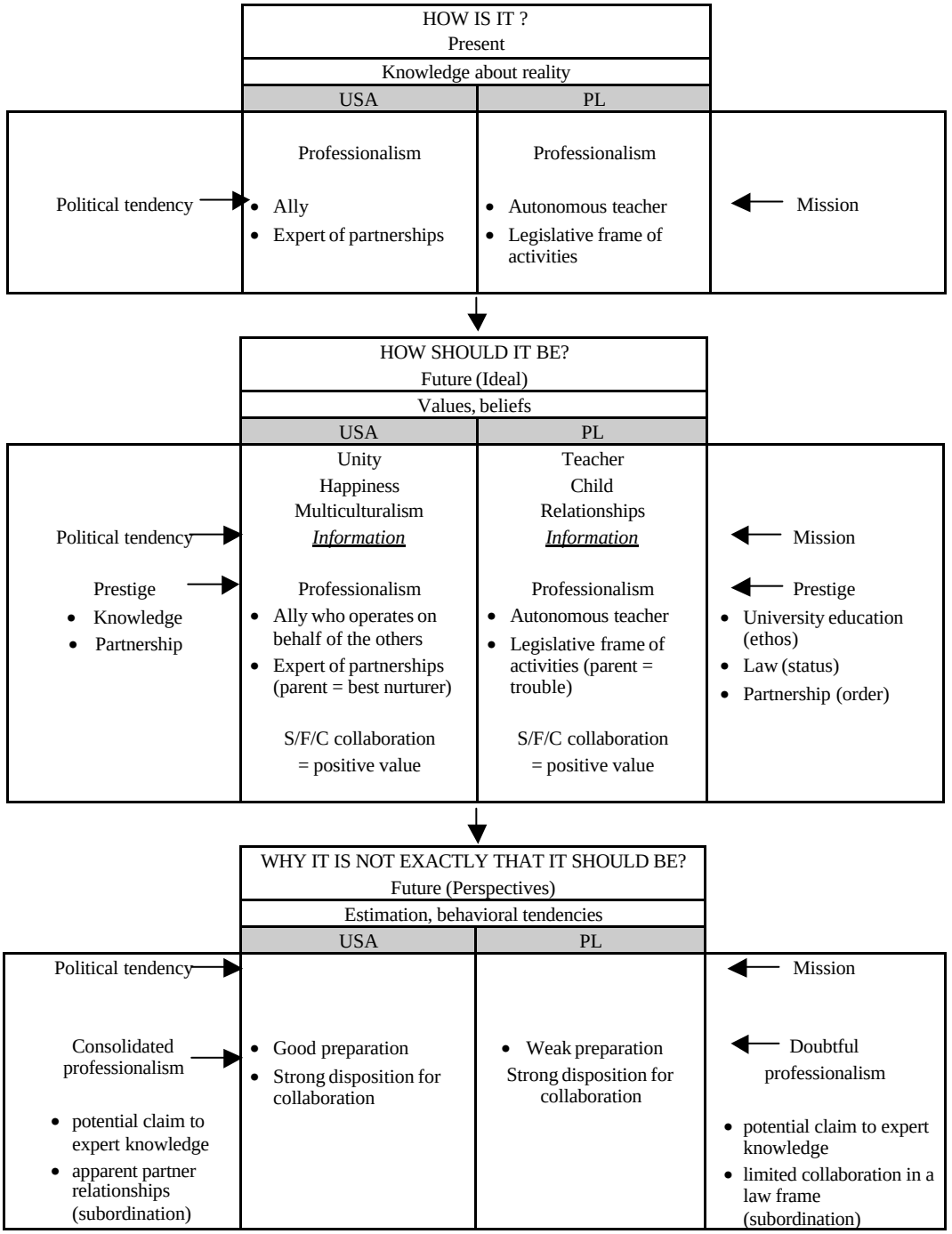
From the aims and questions stated in the above, this is educational, comparative study in the field of community education.

The American part of this research was conducted in collaboration with Dr. Deanna Evans-Schilling from California State University, Fresno. Two 20-people groups of the students of the last year at school from Fresno and Gdansk (University of Gdansk) were involved in this qualitative study, in which the questionnaire that used the Likert's scale and visual metaphors (see: appendix) appeared as most significant implementation. The open questions and description's requests mostly make up this questionnaire as an instrument of discourse analysis in semiotic way. Metaphorical part of the questionnaire played important role concerning not linguistic, 'under-language' code of communication. This appeared useful in a cross-culture study. Visual metaphor that is based on well-known cultural icons (logos of TV channels, covers of popular magazines) as a way of communication became more „readable', than English in our global and foremost visual culture[7]. Apart from the questionnaire, environmental observation, analyses of the documents (description of the courses, student's guides, etc.), and teachers' interviews the researcher endowed with empirical data.

The students' metaphors and written statements were analyzed in semiotic way, with careful approach to meaningful text. Structure of the analyses resembles the elements of a poster that is the result of problem solving through discussion, which is called *metaplan* (big plan-poster)[8]. This was a three-part structure:

1. How is it now? The present state of reality concerning school, family, and community collaboration. The analyzed component of the orientation: KNOWLEDGE. The categories of data that were analyzed in this section: rights and responsibilities of parents, teachers, and community members about the education of children; stereotypes of parental role in schooling; own experiences concerning school, family, and community collaboration.
2. How should it be? Future (Ideal). The analyzed component of the orientation: VALUES, BELIEFS. The categories of data that were analyzed in this section: ideal state and a rank of school, family, and community collaboration; spheres of school life, in which the influence of parents should be limited (forbidden spheres).
3. Why it is not exactly how it should be? Future (Perspectives). The analyzed component of the orientation: ESTIMATION, BEHAVIORAL TENDENCIES. The categories of data that were analyzed in this section: estimation of the own preparation for collaboration with parents and community; readiness of partnership collaboration.

Table 1 - A Map of Prospective Teachers' Orientation



Findings

In the final section of the analyses that followed the structure above, the map was made of prospective teachers' orientations about collaboration between school, family, and community. This map might be read like a big poster or entire picture that present the orientations of American and Polish students

How is it?

Entire tendencies in a perception of reality

Most distinguishing tendency in the students' perception of a part of reality that concerns school, family, and community collaboration is feeling of mission - in Poland, and political tendency - in the United States. It is adequately represented in the metaphors. In the statements that were written as a supplement of visual metaphors by American students, political layer usually is presented, e.g., as an interpretation of societal stratification:

***Present**: National Geographic - The community and school is ethnically diverse. Depending on the parent involvement, it is also diverse [quest.7US].*

Or - as a kind of generalized critical description of reality:

***Present**: Life - This magazine has easy to read, scratch the surface articles about current events. The issues are important to some people, not all. It is a way people get information. America does not like to read, so there are lots of pictures. They are usually human-interest stories without much substance [quest.2US].*

It is worthwhile to notice that political tendency in American students' metaphors does not mean an inclination to compete and win a power. As Joanna Rutkowiak wrote this kind of policy in human mentality is a rule of thinking about education, a disposition to perceiving everyday life in a perspective of relationships between institutions of state, law, and society[9].

Polish students' views present the mission, in which - one could say: well-educated people (teachers) have a lot of work to do changing the corrupted world, e.g.,

***Present**: Discovery - interesting programs, beautiful pictures, the ways that everything is presented and commented. FUTURE: National Geographic - a variety of topics that are prepared and realized by educated people [quest.18PL].*

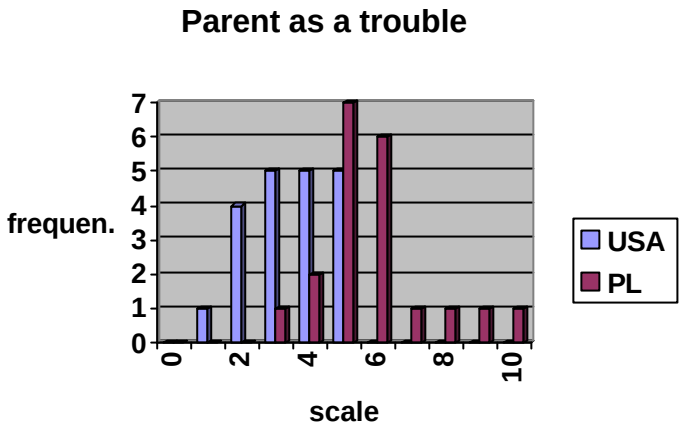
***Present**: animal Planet - Life and animal customs. Society =a herd. FUTURE: National Geographic - beautiful pictures, colored, everything is in its own place. All should be ordered [quest.14PL].*

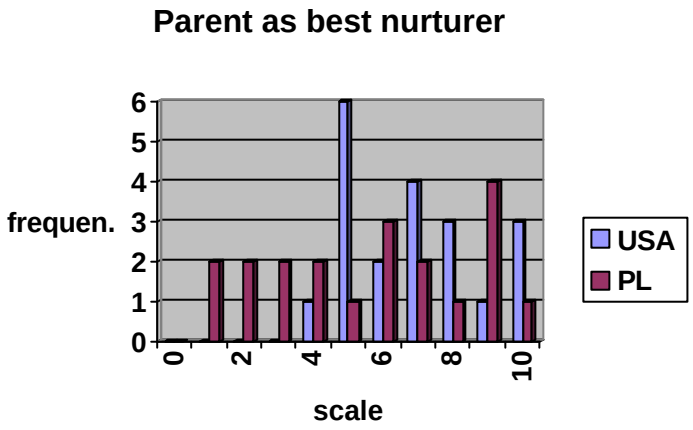
In a mission approach of Polish students the modern ethos of teachers' work was recognized. It is fine in a postmodern era; it is still alive although our world has radically changed. Ethos is understood here as a deep structure that is not directly observable in individual declarations and actions as well as in social habits and the state legal system. Social structure is apparent due to people behaviors, ethos must be read from people's hearts[10]. Ethos of teachers' mission that is showed in the orientations of Polish students resembles the structures that were created in a former system (subordination as immanent feature of it). However, its roots are connected with the Enlightenment striving to the Truth, power of Reason, etc.

Similarly, the strong tendency in generalized orientation of students of both groups is emphasized by the professionalism of teachers. To sum up, we may state that American professionalism means being an ally of the milieu where the students came from; Polish - keeping autonomous position that is independent from the local community. What are the particular understandings of teaching profession in the context of school, family, and community relationships will be expressed in further analyses.

Stereotypes of parent's role

Most spectacularly the frequency of perception parents as *a trouble* and as *best nurturer* appeared in a study.





Rights and Responsibilities

Talking about the rights of parents, teachers, the local community and their responsibilities students clearly divide spheres of influence with a tendency to seeing parents as experts in moral education and teaching good behavior.

Parents have a right '*to meddle with teacher's ways of moral education' [PL]* but it is not allowed for them '*to comment the teacher's didactic methods' [PL]*. Polish teacher in order to keeping his or her autonomy teaches with no comments, no feedback of self-work.

In American group this right was also strongly emphasized but teacher's role was precisely described as an ally, who *discuss student's school performance* with parents focusing on everyone's *privacy*. Teacher teaches *critical thinking* and strives to extend the idea of *lifelong learning* in accordance to *local standards*. He or she expects that *local community will defense school interest*. In that context political tendency of American students is presented again.

Some of Polish students grasped the relationship among teachers and community in the same way. They perceived teacher's role as an ally, just only

in that relationship. However, the significant separation of Polish teachers and parents was evident. Teachers developed modern narration (ethos), in which laws were strongly expressed. *All partners have to respect children rights* and parents foremost *must be responsible about school attendance of their children.* Teachers should *estimate students' progress with fair approach, increase virtues,* and *transfer knowledge in accordance to curricula,* etc. Most Polish students (85%) perceive 'parent, as a trouble' as something common. American group did not rather see this role in reality (no indications on the right side of a scale). Nobody likes trouble and wants to cease it. Some trouble demands something to be done, a problem should be solved by somebody. Polish group sees parents like a problem for themselves. They feel they have to do something with them, more likely to master them. Polish students' position that was recognized in the analyses was a position above parents, in unequal relationship that cannot be identified as partnership. Teacher, who feels professional in the way that was presented earlier, who sees not parent but a real problem will probably use a procedure of control, manipulation, and management that is called 'practice of repartition' in Michel Foucault writings[11]. Thus a discourse becomes uncovered. In this parents are the objects of discursive practice.

Parent, as the best nurturer is a distinguished role in American perception. In Polish group it was also noticed but not such precisely as a common way of perceiving the role of parents at school. In every analysis American students presented a tendency of putting parents' activities into frame of moral education and teaching behavioral skills. They used peculiar rhetoric, in which partnership became a label of dominant role of teacher in a relationship with parent. Their easy-going approach to term 'partnership' and practice that characterizes school, family, and community partnerships shows very comfortable position of teachers, who *know* how to do partnerships. And on one hand they expressed parents right to be responsible for their children, children at school, as well, and on the other hand they made parents' influence schooling extremely narrow keeping them far from teaching (also management of school, family, and community partnerships) that might be recognized as a sphere of the only teachers' influence. It has to be treated as a denial of a core, essential importance of partnership although that term was often quoted in students' statements. American students' approach to parents seeing as best nurturer a definition of teachers appeared as the best in teaching (and in management of school, family, and community partnerships) - the experts. In that rhetoric, in which parents are marginalized, also discursive practice was identified.

How should it be?

Values as components of students' orientations were analyzed through description of ideal state of school, family, and community partnerships. This was spectacularly shown in metaphorical statements but also in an opposition to the ideal, e.g., by indication of the spheres of school life, in which parents' influence should be forbidden (situations when ideal is collapsed due to parental involvement).

Majority of American students did not see those spheres (60% US). Most Polish students saw them (only 45% stated that those spheres do not exist) and described them emphasizing protection of teacher's autonomy. Teaching methods, didactic programs, issue of students' estimation, etc. were indicated most often.

Professional discourse is increased in this value and in students' beliefs that lead to conclusion of high appreciation for the teacher's competence legitimized by an academic diploma.

***Present**: Scientific American - too difficult for laymen; teachers know schooling but parents do not do so then, they do not interfere with this. FUTURE: National Geographic - I think collaboration has to be increased in the future.*

There is a lot of work to do in order to have good achievements [quest.4PL].

One could ask: who has a lot of work to do? Of course a teacher is that person, who feels a mission of correction of the bad world. Other example clearly indicates that tendency:

***Present**: Cartoon Network - interesting, human-oriented cartoons. Collaboration begins but it is still in the diapers...[quest.9PL]*
like a child, who needs upbringing, permanent control, and protection by adults (people with a higher position).

American students estimated current state of collaboration also negatively and saw a need of getting rid of the confusion. In their thinking suggestion was uncovered to do that by striving to a happy, multicultural unity of school, family, and community in contemporary society of information technologies.

***Present**: Outside Magazine - says 'Wild one'. Girl on a bike, somewhat out of control. I feel that school-home-community collaboration is in a state of disarray right now, nobody is 100% sure about their part. FUTURE: National Geographic - peaceful night sky with fireworks. There will be a celebration due to the peaceful unity* [M.M.'s underline] *of home-school-community [quest.20US].*

***Future**: Reader's Digest - The woman on the front cover was smiling so I assumed she was happy. I think everyone will be happy* [M.M.'s underline] *in the home, school, and community collaboration [quest.12US].*
***Present**: CNN - News reporting. Teachers create newsletters.*
***Future**: BBC - More multicultural* [M.M.'s underline] *[quest.1US].*

***Present**: Cartoon Network - the Cartoon Network is what appeals to the children - providing a variety of unrealistic and colorful programs. Children grow up with the TV and prefer watching cartoons to being engaged in active learning. FUTURE: Discovery - The Discovery Channel explores new ideas and informs the public about why things work and provides wide range of knowledge. Children and parents will be open to new ideas and be open to receive a great deal of information* [M.M.'s underline] *[quest. 6US].*

In the Polish group an important role of information in the ideal state of school, family, and community collaboration was also noticed but the students were concentrated on teacher qualification, character of relationships, and child well-being.

***Present**: MTV - plenty of information. Today world is 'jagged', it is characterized by plurality of information* [M.M.'s underline] *(...), lack of adaptation ability, and finding one's own place. FUTURE: Life, BBC (Prime) - it concerns the things that are familiar and directed to a child* [M.M.'s underline] *and child's needs (!) [quest.17PL].*

Central place of character of relationship and emphasis of the positions of partners in Polish students' orientation are adequately expressed in a group of metaphors that were built on an 'Animal Planet's logo. The analyses of them resemble socio-biological studies, in which human culture is considered on a basis of analogies to animal world. This also adequately represents the mission and professional discourse that was mentioned above.

***Present**: Animal Planet - (...) everyone fights in order to survive and wants to win a position* [M.M.'s underline] *of dominant male in a herd.*
***Future**: Canal+ - (...) everyone can find something for himself. Everyone should find his own place. First of all there has to be a will for collaboration. Everyone should be glad. [quest.13PL].*

The rank of school, family, and community collaboration in a scale was estimated as a very high. There was no significant difference among groups involved in a study. Therefore we may say that collaboration is a value in the orientations of both American and Polish students.

Why it is not exactly what it should be?
There is an interesting situation, in which - on one hand both groups involved in a study presented high disposition for future collaboration with parents and communities (on a scale: 90% frequency of answers 'very much'). And on the other hand, the self-estimation of students' preparation for school, family, and community collaboration looks much more optimistic in the American group (on a scale: 90% frequency of answers 'very much') than in the Polish (answers harmonically extended from point 2 to 9).

Thinking about the Polish group it is hard to say that such a situation is comfortable. Their feeling of professionalism in school, family, and community partnerships is likely less obvious and more doubtful. No university courses concerned directly the issue of partnerships, only some of them included it in their contents. However, it always depended on academic teacher's decision. Although Polish students are hesitant about their academic preparation they do not feel worse. Their position that is indicated by university diploma and Polish law endows them with a feeling of power and high proficiency instead of good preparation. This might be a kind of compensation due to a lack of adequate preparation. Furthermore, this could partially explain a reason why teachers in Poland prefer limited parents' involvement and escape to the laws if their relationships with parents are not fully satisfactory[12]. The students who participated in this study might do so.
American disposition on the area of school, family, and community collaboration seems to be complicated though they are highly optimistic in their estimation of self-preparation and ready to begin collaboration very soon. Their approach to parents that expects them to be only the best nurturers, and relaxed attitude towards school, family, and community partnerships (e.g., use of professional terms concerning this interdisciplinary issue, acronyms: S/F/C, drawings that illustrated partner's relationships, etc.) predict a claim to expert knowledge and increasing of a discourse. In other words, discursive practice by American students may be based on perception of parents' role (best nurturer) and their beliefs concerning the expert-knowledge about child's education or school, family, and community partnerships that were created through the university studies. They were critically oriented and consisted of several topics that were directly concerned with the partnerships' issue.

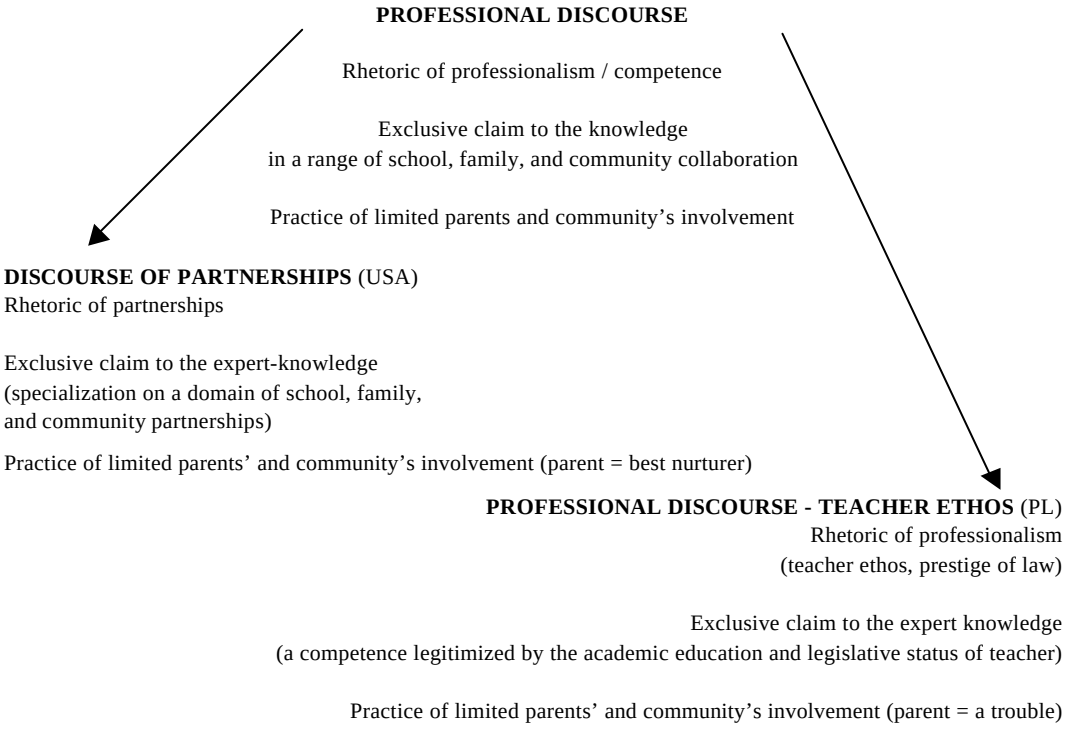
Therefore reflection is moving to the importance of academic studies due to their role in a professional discourse that was uncovered in my analyses.
The analyzed orientations match the models of pre-service training by Joanna Rutkowiak[13].
Scientific model seems to be adequate with a character of Polish training that was discovered in a study. On a basis of the Enlightenment narration this assumes significant meaning of transmission and accommodation of knowledge. Teacher's responsibility about what he or she is doing at school keeps the outer character because scientific truth (academically legitimized) is more important than own experiences or everyday-observations. The hints of science justify teacher's way of work. From that, the 'academic' professionalism strongly emphasized by Polish students (role of teacher ethos and diploma that legitimizes power of science) and continuing defense of teacher's autonomy with extended laws' argumentation (when academic status quo becomes not strong enough in a collision with reality) find the explanation. This predicts the extension of discursive practice, in which the university as a speaker and beneficent of discourse makes a reproduction of privileges and marginalizations.

Model of **'Practice of thinking'** seems to be appropriate for the orientations of American students. This includes a presumption about the unity of thinking and action, in which the effort of understanding the world around plays most important role. Teacher organizes educational work on w basis of own reflection created in a process of understanding. Teacher's responsibility is a natural consequence of such a procedure. That model is rooted in a critical philosophy, which plenty of aspects we may find in contemporary tendencies in American higher education[14]. 'Practice of thinking' is likely a practice of the students involved in a study. Foremost it is confirmed in their political approach to the issues concerning school, family, and community partnerships. This is spectacularly seen also in the features of an ally that were represented in students' orientations. However, besides that model American students are obvious about their preparation for prospective work on a field of school, family, and community partnerships, and thus they feel responsible, independent, and powerful (experts on partnerships). Critically oriented pre-service training trained the experts, who keep narrow view and loose the ability for entire perception of reality. Finally, both the university and the students become the speakers and beneficent of a discourse that reminds a hegemony, in which striving to make unequal relationships common is widely noticed.

The orientations of American and Polish students that were described through the above analyses provoke the conclusions about a need of changes in pre-service training in order to limit or eliminate the procedures of professional discourse.

Following maps grasp that discourse in general and indicate some challenges addressed to particular actors on that scene (Map 1, 2).

Map no. 1 - Map of a context - professional discourse in the orientations of American and Polish students.



Map no.2 - Map of a discursive formations followed from the analysis of the orientations of American and Polish students

	Agent	Discourse	Position	Pre-disposition	Disposition / transposition	Advice
U S A	**University**	Partnerships - reform, social capital	Freedom, equality, democracy	Challenge of current social reality	Changing social reality	Independence of defining and redefining the social world. Holistic education, focus on human being
	Student	Partnerships - happy unity of school, family, and community	Professionalism on a range of school, family, and community partnerships (expert of partnerships)	Feeling of comfort (high self-estimation)	Claim to expert-knowledge on a basis of successful education in a range of school, family, and community partnerships	Understanding (emphatic approach to human being)
	Parents / Community	Representation	Object	Marginalization	Resistance (passivity, struggle)	Voice (out-going from role of best nurturer, access to every sphere of school life)
P L	**University**	Partnerships - reform, democratization of social life	Ethos, Mission, Generosity	Mission	Changing social reality	Critical thinking (anticipation and social activism; education based on emancipation and innovations)
	Student	Autonomy of teacher	Professionalism of teacher	Feeling of doubtful professionalism	Claim to expert-knowledge on a basis of ethos of teacher's work and legislative status (legitimized by diploma and laws)	Understanding (knowledge of school, family, and community partnerships, critical competence, emphatic)
	Parents / Community	Representation	Object	Marginalization	Resistance (passivity, struggle)	Voice (out-going from role of a trouble, access to every sphere of school life)

** Structure of a map is inspired by: Szkudlarek, T. (1997): Democracy in Poland and the Throes of School Reform: Between Modern Dreams and Post-modern Politics*, [In:] *Democratic Discipline, Democratic Lives: Educating Citizens for a Changing World, Conference Materials, May 12-14, 1997. Loughborough, UK, p.72*

Most significant observation is that in both groups subordinate position of parents and communities appeared. Prospective teachers' dispositions to work with them and built partnerships are rooted in their approach to partners from dominant place. It potentially will lead parents and community members to resistance and strategies of defense in the relationships with school and teachers.
Next map presents those positions and meaningful advice for the all agents of professional discourse that was uncovered through the analyses of the orientations of prospective teachers.

Final conclusion

These maps are overlapping in several items but mostly they are indicating different basis of discourse that takes place in both countries. This is the professional discourse with twofold explanation.
In the U.S. the proficiency that is grounded in students' thinking may lead to the realm of power in the area of school, family, and community partnerships, especially through the role of teacher as an expert.
Polish professionalism of prospective teachers originates from the *ethos* of teachers' service for the society. This focuses on the feeling of mission of making improving the world by revision and permanent correction into expected forms. The lack of the expert-knowledge on school, family, and community partnerships (there are no courses on this topic) is compensated for by the emphasis on legislative issues and position of teacher that is guaranteed by law.
It appeared that both groups involved in the study are potential agents of the discursive practice in the field of school, family, and community partnerships.
Due to this conclusion the models of higher education in the United States and in Poland were identified and compared. Polish Enlightenment 'scientific model of teachers' education', and more critical American model that is rooted in 'practice of thinking', they both need the change and should be redesigned into the models of obtaining the interpretative abilities of prospective teachers (e.g. teachers who believe in 'learner-person first' as American researchers advocate for[15]).
They should continually learn, define and redefine the world locating themselves in between, not in the position above students, parents, and community partners. This is the only way that real school, family, and community partnerships are built in order to student's success and increasing social capital.

Notes

1 See: Putnam, D. (1995): Bowling Alone. *Journal of Democracy,* no.1; Coleman, J.S. (1988): Social capital in the creation of human capital. *Journal of Sociology,* American Edition, no. 94.
2 Epstein, J.L., Sanders, M.G. (2000): Connecting Home, School, and Community: New Directions for Social Research [in] *Handbook of the Sociology of Education.* Edited by Maureen T. Hallinan, Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers, New York - Boston - Dordrecht - London - Moscow, pp. 287-288.
3 See: Mendel, M. (1998): *Rodzice i szkola: Jak uczestniczyc w edukacji dzieci? [Parents and the School: How to Participate in the Education of Children?],* Wydawnictwo Adam Marszalek, Torun.
4 Ziolkowski, M. (1990): Orientacje indywidualne a system spoleczny [Individual orientations and social system] (In:) *Orientacje spoleczne jako element mentalnosci [Social orientation as an element of mentality],* J.Reykowski, M.Ziolkowski (Eds.), Wydawnictwo NAKOM, Poznan.
5 Mendel, M. (2001): *Edukacja spoleczna. Partnerstwo rodziny, szkoly i gminy w perspektywie amerykanskiej [Community Education: Family, School, and Community Partnerships in an American Perspective],* Wydawnictwo Adam Marszalek, Torun.
6 Research on this project has been sponsored by Polish Committee of Academic Research, grant No. KBN 0396/H01/2000/18.

7 The problem of visual culture is interesingly discussed in: Szkudlarek, T. (1999): *Media i edukacja. Szkic z filozofii i pedagogiki dystansu [Media and Education: A Draft on Philosophy and Pedagogy of Distance]*. Wydawnictwo Impuls, Krakow.

8 *Metaplan* is a popular method of productive discussion, in which everyone has a chance to participate by use of every way that is individually prefered. In a final part of discussion the poster - written version of a discussion (from its begining to the ending conclusions) is completed. This method is recently common in a human resources management.

9 *Odmiany myslenia o edukacji [Versions of Thinking about the Education]* (1995) J.Rutkowiak [Ed.], Wydawnictwo Impuls, Krakow, pp. 39-40.

10 Kurczewski, J. (1998): Rozwazania nad struktura spolecznej emancypacji [Reflections on the structure of social emancipation], *Studia Socjologiczne [Sociological Studies],* no. 2 (149), p.84.

11 Foucault, M. (1977): *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* Penguin Press, London.

12 See: empirical studies reported in, e.g.: Segiet, W. (1999): *Rodzice i nauczyciele: wzajemne stosunki i reprezentacje [Parents and Teachers: Mutual Relationships and Representations],* Wydawnictwo Ksiazka i Wiedza, Warszawa - Poznan; Mendel, M. (1998): *Parents and the Schools*...op. cit. (2000): *Partnerstwo rodziny, szkoly i gminy [Family,School, and Community Partnerships],* Wydawnictwo Adam Marszalek, Torun.

13 *Learning from the Outsider: European Perspectives of the Educational Collaboration* (1997) J.Rutkowiak (Ed.), Wydawnictwo Impuls, Krakow, pp. 25-28.

14 The analysis of several academic handbooks in a comparison to the analysis of the contents of university courses confirm the statement in the above. See, e.g.: Bennett deMarrais, K., LeCompte, M.D. (1999): *The Way Schools Work. A Sociological Analysis of Education. Third Edition.* Longman, New York-Reading, Massachusetts-Menlo Park, California-Harlow, England-Don Mills, Ontario-Sydney-Mexico City-Madrid-Amsterdam; Wink, J. (1997): *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World,* Longman, New York-Reading, Massachusetts-Menlo Park, California-Harlow, England-Don Mills, Ontario-Sydney-Mexico City-Madrid-Amsterdam.

15 Stuart, C., Thurlow, D. (2000): Making It Their Own: Preservice Teachers' Experiences, Beliefs, and Classroom Practices, *Journal of Teacher Education,* vol. 51, no. 2.

Parents as a problem?

Sean Neill

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Parents as a problem?

Abstract
A survey of views on unacceptable behaviour by 2575 teachers included threats from parents and other third parties; these constituted a relatively infrequent but serious problem to teachers. Written-in comments indicated that some parents contributed to a range of routine disruptive behaviours by supporting their children against the school when confrontation arose. Structural modelling indicated that the more serious problems, including conflict with parents, were due more to social background factors impacting on the school than effective within-support to teachers. Within-school support was more important in ameliorating routine disruption, but many respondents felt that demands for external accountability took up senior management time and attention, and inhibited management from giving effective support. While government initiatives are now supporting schools against difficult parents, reducing the current confrontational ethos in accountability is likely to be more difficult.

Introduction
Current concern about the incidence of high-level disruption in schools, which has even led teachers experienced in South African townships to advise their colleagues to avoid working in Britain (Braid & MacGregor 2001) led to the commissioning by the National Union of Teachers to a survey of the level of unacceptable behaviour experienced by members of the Union in a representative range of local authorities. The survey covered lower-level disruption to lessons as well as high-level disruption verging on the criminal such as drug use and dealing, threats of violence and the possession of offensive weapons. One aspect of the survey was the incidence of threats by third parties including parents to pupils and staff, the extreme manifestation of a range of reported incidents where parents supported their children against the mandate of their school. This reflects the general emphasis by politicians on the rights of consumers while increasing the demands on producers, in this case parents and teachers (Labour Party 2001). While there are many examples of productive cooperation between teachers and parents, for example parent governors contributing their expertise to their school (e.g. Troman & Woods 2001) the political emphasis on consumerism in education tends, as Torman & Woods point out, to set consumers (parents, on behalf of their children) against producers (teachers). While this is unlikely to be a decisive influence on the majority of parents, it could tend to encourage those who are truculent

of disaffected from education. During the course of the survey the Government started consultation on enforcing the duties of parents in respect of high-level disruptive children (DfEE 2001a, Morris 2001); the problem of lower-level but more frequent disruption to lessons currently remains unaddressed. Problems with parents were among a range of types of 'unacceptable behaviour' included in a survey of teachers in England and Wales, analysed for the National Union of Teachers by the University of Warwick. In this paper we look specifically at this area of concern.

The sample

Questionnaires were sent out to 17188 teachers resident in 13 local education authorities (LEAs) selected to give a geographical and social spread. The areas included large towns with a mix of affluent and deprived areas (Bournemouth); cities with industrial and deprived inner-city areas (Bristol, Cardiff, Islington [Inner London], Leeds, Leicester, Middlesborough Tameside), counties including a mix of rural areas and large towns/cities (East Sussex, Nottinghamshire); and predominantly rural counties, though with aras of deprivation in some rural and town areas (Norfolk, Northumberland, and Pembrokeshire). A total of 2575 (15.0%) questionnaires were returned in time to be used in the analysis. A few teachers, who worked in adjacent authorities to those where they lived, or in private schools, reported on these.

As in other similar surveys, two thirds of respondents were 40 or over; more than two thirds were female. Most were highly experienced; over half had 16 years experience or more. Four-fifths were full-time; of the remainder two-thirds were part-time and one-third supply. The great majority (nearly 90%) worked in primary and secondary schools, with slightly more in secondary schools; around 4% worked in under-5s and special schools respectively, and about 1% in pupil referral units and as LEA centrally employed teachers respectively. This distribution of respondents reflects the composition of the teaching force in general, and shows strong similarities to a survey of NUT members on performance management, carried out a month before with a similarly sized sample in a similar geographical spread of authorities (Neill 2001a). The current sample contains a slightly higher proportion of respondents who would be likely to report misbehaviour than the performance management sample; it is therefore likely that non-respondents would have been working in schools with fewer problems than respondents. However a proportion of respondents reported, in their completion of the closed-response questions, in written-in comments, or both, that they had encountered no problems in their schools. The strong similarity in the distribution of respondent types across the two surveys, which were investigating very different topics, confirms the representativeness of the sample for this survey, and incidentally of the sample for the performance management survey. Respondents were asked to indicate their main responsibility; where several were indicated the most senior was chosen. Over half the sample were classroom teachers, with about a tenth being middle management and curriculum co-ordinators; other groups constituted 2-4%. The 'unidentified other' group (about 8%) included supply teachers and key stage co-ordinators in primary schools. Distribution between local authorities generally reflected authority size. Half the respondents worked in schools with 20% of pupils or below on the special educational needs (SEN) register, three-quarters 30% or below and less than 10% of schools (including the special schools) above 50%. Similar but higher proportions were eligible for free school meals (the commonly used measure of poverty in the United Kingdom, but an unreliable one as take-up of free school meals is voluntary) - half with 25% or below eligible, three-quarters 45% or below, and 10% with above 60% eligible.

Methods

The questionnaire contained three sections of closed questions and seven boxes for written-in

open-ended comments. The closed questions, which were drawn up in consultation between the National Union of Teachers and the University of Warwick, covered biographical details on individual respondents; four questions on their schools; two series of questions, on behaviour problems witnessed by respondents, and problems personally experienced by respondents, and questions on training, support, and the role of non-teaching staff and LEAs. Finally respondents were asked if behaviour had worsened since they started teaching. It was stressed that respondents should complete the questionnaire anonymously and that written-in comments were voluntary. Questionnaires were distributed to NUT members in the selected local authorities and there was no reminder letter. 'Split-half' reliability assessments were performed by entering the data into the analysis in three sections as questionnaires were achieved, and comparing the responses of the sections. There were no educationally significant differences between the data for the three sections, indicating both the overall reliability of the data, and that early returns, which might have been expected to be from more aggrieved teachers or union activists, did not differ from those of later respondents, whose attitude might have been expected to be more relaxed.

Most of the analysis was conducting using the package SPSS for Windows version 8 (SPSS Inc., 1997); structural modeling used the package EQS (Bentler 1995, Byrne 1994). Questions were recoded to give a pattern by which high frequency of unacceptable behaviour was coded high, and a high incidence of mitigating factors was also coded high, so that there would be negative correlations between the presence of high levels of unacceptable behaviour and the presence of, for example, in-school support.

As the first stage in the modeling process, the responses to the proposals were grouped using factor analysis with Kaiser's varimax rotation. New variables corresponding to the factors revealed were constructed by calculating the mean of the variables loading on each factor. Variables which loaded onto more than one factor were included only on the factor for which they loaded highest. These variables were then correlated with each other and with the biographical variables as a guide to an appropriate model structure. The data for the factors and biographical variables was then transferred to EQS and the model was built up to reflect the likely causal links. See model page 147.

Threats from parents and pupils

Respondents were asked how often they came across problems on a four-point scale - every year, term, month or week? The questions were framed in this very specific form to limit subjectivity in the responses. Responses were recoded 1-5, with 5 representing weekly incidence, and 1 representing no report of a problem. (As respondents were not specifically asked if a problem was *not encountered*, 'no report' cannot, strictly, be taken as indicating that a problem did not occur, though some respondents wrote in to specify that problems which were not ticked did not occur in their school). We may group unacceptable behaviours into two broad groups; behaviours with a mode of 5 (equivalent to weekly), and behaviours with a mode of 1 (equivalent to occurring infrequently, and not at all in some schools). Within these two broad groups the means allow us to make finer discriminations.

Problems with parents fell into the 'infrequent' group, experienced on average between once and several times a year, comprised threats to pupils of third-party violence, as well as bullying, damage to property, abuse / insult to the teacher personally, and other actual or threatened incidents. The most serious subgroup of problems - including threats of violence by parents as well as being pushed or touched by pupils, threats of violence to teachers by pupils, offensive weapons, possession of drugs and, especially, traffic in drugs - were infrequent, and the majority of respondents had not experienced them.

These less frequent misbehaviours may be compared with the 'weekly' group, the first subgroup includes five types of misbehaviour in lessons (interruptions, answering back, disruption, offensive language, and refusal to work) which nevertheless made the day-to-day business of teaching virtually impossible for some respondents. The second subgroup (conduct violations, dress code violations, threats of pupil-pupil violence, and defiance) represent rather more serious threats to the rule structure of schools, which are encountered weekly by between a half and a third of all respondents. There is therefore a roughly inverse relation between the seriousness of behaviour problems and their frequency.

Responses about individual unacceptable behaviours

Threats from third parties (from written-in comments, usually parents, less often former pupils) were much less frequent than threats of pupil-pupil violence, being experienced by rather more than half the respondents (52.7%), but, like threatened pupil-pupil violence, where it did occur it appeared relatively frequently, with approaching a third of respondents experiencing these threats weekly (16.1%) or monthly (14.5%); it was less frequent for these threats to be an occasional (termly or annual) occurrence. Threats to pupils of physical violence directly by pupils [Pupil-pupil violence] were by far the most frequent of the serious problems witnessed by respondents, with five-sixths (83.2%) of respondents reporting it and approaching half (43.4%) experiencing it on a weekly basis, with a further fifth (19.3%) experiencing it monthly. A climate of threatened pupil-pupil violence is therefore part of the routine working environment for the majority of teachers. Though threats from third parties to pupils occur less frequently than direct threats by other pupils, this is balanced by their greater seriousness in creating a general climate of violence.

Turning to discipline problems personally experienced by respondents, threats of physical violence indirectly by third parties e.g. parents [threats by parents] are even more serious than those from pupils, and nearly a tenth (7.9%) of respondents reported experiencing them more than annually - that is termly, or for some, monthly or weekly. However three-quarters of respondents (75.8%) did not report encountering threats of physical violence - though verbal abuse or insult, not covered by this question, are also potentially unsettling. of physical violence Threats directly by pupils were not experienced by nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.5%); they were a weekly (4.6%) or monthly (4.9%) occurrence for a twentieth of respondents respectively. However a quarter of respondents (25.0% total) encountered threats infrequently (termly or annually); and a situation where violent threats are a regular experience for a tenth of teachers should give rise to concern.

A concern, here and elsewhere was the presence of children who could not cope with ordinary classroom life, sometimes due to inclusion policies. Even small numbers of such children could have a disproportionate effect and in some cases teachers felt parents contributed to the difficulties they experienced with these pupils;

- All the above incidents are from one pupil only who is a totally disruptive influence both emotionally and academically to the other children in my class. On one occasion both the parent and child were emotionally disruptive in the class and the Head told me to go into the library with my class. This child seems inappropriately placed in a mainstream school. (Primary, female, 40-9)
- We have a tightly structured discipline policy but barriers are constantly pushed by 25% of pupils and 5-10% of parents / carers. (Primary headteacher, male, 50-9)

A third of respondents (33.9%) felt they had a lot of support from management in dealing with problem behaviour as a whole; over half (59.9%) felt they received some. Many respondents thought that heads and other senior management

were distracted from giving proper support by too much orientation to the demands of children or parents, or by administration and bureaucracy;

- Willing to supervise children removed from classroom & to contact parents. Unwilling to exclude. Children returned to classroom after violent incidents. (Primary, female, 29-39)
- Theoretically our head is an experienced practitioner in EBD - realistically the head is an expert in the paper war. (Centrally employed teacher, male, 50-9)

If you were a victim of an assault did you feel the support the school gave you was excellent / reasonable / poor / non-existent? [Support after assault]

Over a quarter of respondents (27.4%) answered this question; written-in comments indicated that some respondents who had not suffered assaults felt lucky not to have, or that while they personally had not, colleagues in their school had. A fifth (20.3%) of the respondents who did answer felt they had received excellent support, with over a third (38.3%) feeling it was reasonable. However nearly a third (29.4%) felt support had been poor and a sixth (12.1%) that it had been non-existent. Comments about colleagues' experience suggested similar proportions, but could not be quantified exactly. In many cases respondents thought there had been little effective support or sympathy, again often because of maintaining enrolment or as a result of outside pressure, though there were reports of excellent support:

- There appears to be a reluctance to take up cases, particularly for supply, out of fear of backlash from parents or having to substantiate the case to parents who are invariably hostile. (Primary supply, male, 50-9)
- The management are frightened to death of having to discipline any pupil severely (i.e. expel or suspend or involve parents very much). The consequence is constant inappropriate behaviour, even here. I decided to leave this school as of July 2001. (Independent secondary school, male, 40-9)
- I have had verbal abuse from parents but, thankfully, personally, not physical - 3 colleagues have. (Primary, female, 50-9)
- We have telephone connections in all classrooms for immediate response. Every class has a LSA for 1/2 day minimum. All incidents are followed up and pupils excluded → parents involved → apologise. (Primary, male, 40-9)
- Pupil threw a hard sweet at the back of my head. Investigated - suspended. Pupil brought in with mother. Met me to apologise. (Secondary, female, 29-39)

Very few respondents (2.1%) felt that local education authorities (LEAs) had been very supportive helping the school address pupil behaviour; an eighth (13.1%) felt they had been fairly supportive. A third of respondents were undecided, and over half (50.3%) felt that they had been not very or not at all supportive. The written-in comments indicated that LEA support had been slow or inadequate, and that the authority tended to support disruptive children rather than staff or cooperative children;

- We had many exclusions 2 years ago. None at present. The 'Haven' is used by very disruptive pupils, supervised by *non-teaching* staff with *no* special training as such. They are at times with the children on their own. This I find unacceptable. Two adults are on sick leave. Parents object that 'good' children do not use the special facilities in the 'Haven'. I agree. (Primary, female, 50-9, East Sussex.)
- Outside agencies do not know what to suggest with children who are too young to reason with, draw up agreements with etc. We are trying to compensate for poor parenting skills. (Under-5s, female, 40-9)
- Help needed with parents / pupils who are persistently misbehaving. Schools need to feel empowered. *Parents need to be identified by school and then lea help given*. (Primary, female, 40-9, threats of violence from parents marked as 'major problem area')

Approaching two-thirds of respondents (59.5%) felt that behaviour had become very much worse since they started teaching; together with those who felt there had been a fairly marked deterioration, this meant that over four-fifths of respondents (80.3%) felt there had been a deterioration. A tenth (9.5%), often young teachers who felt unable to comment owing to their limited experience, were undecided; a similar proportion felt that there had been little or no deterioration (10.2% total). Many found parental attitudes a major part of the problem, raising issues both with the sanctions available to teachers and teachers' own security;

- Please help - we do have a very good behavioural policy but how do we cope with abusive and violent parents - ?!*!* There are too many entrances to our school, adults, youths & parents come & go as they please! We need direction from the L.E.A. (Primary middle management, male, 40-9)
- Fights parent / parent - termly. (Primary, female, 50-9)
- More evidence of parents on drugs / alcohol abuse. (Primary, female, 29-39)
- Many parents believe and side with their children against the school and have very weak systems of discipline themselves. The children know we are powerless and take advantage. (Primary, female, 50-9)
- The main difficulties occur when parent(s) are challenging the school and look at us as the enemy. (Primary, female, 50-9)
- It feels that pupils think the rules do not apply to them personally. Their parents are largely responsible for breaking the dress code, and feel that it's their right to do so. (Primary, female, 29-39)
- A lot of poor pupil behaviour in our school is condoned by parents and also is a direct result of instructions parents give their children e.g. if they get into trouble in class they must walk out of the lesson and phone home! (Secondary, female, 40-9)
- Experienced mumbled threats of suing from parents and I had one unfounded accusation of shaking a child violently. This was not pursued. (Primary, female, 40-9)
- I feel children now have such disgusting behaviour as they are the product of bad parents of bad parents. There is <u>no</u> respect, the children do not want to accept any rules or boundaries as they have not been brought up that way because *their* parents weren't either. They resent authority even in Nursery and their parents are even more resentful. They are probably more badly behaved than the children. (Primary, female, 29-39)
- I am very concerned about the vulnerability of staff regarding allegations by pupils & parents. I feel the whole system works on the principle of guilty until proved innocent and a legacy of suspicion. (Primary, female, 40-9)
- Not pupils - but parental expectations i.e. not taking any responsibility, just accusations - no trust - too much compensation culture. Some parents need attention more than kids: we are a handy scapegoat for them to 'shout' at. (Primary, female, 29-39)
- Parents are more argumentative and unsupportive, and more and more I am hearing children telling me and other staff how their parents feel school / teachers / education is crap - so why should the kids do what we want? (Primary, female, 29-39)

Some respondents felt that the problems were exacerbated by the emphasis on 'consumers' rights' by politicians, OFSTED and the media over the last decade;

- The attitude of parents is usually to say they can't cope and pass the problem on to teachers and the school. It's a problem for society as a whole, not just schools. (Primary, male, 60+)
- Parents are encouraged to point the finger of blame at schools if their children do not behave well or do well at school. The status of teaching is low because the Government and the Media are always saying we are underachieving. (Primary, male, 50-9)
- As HT of an inner city primary school I feel that pupil behaviour, parental refusal to accept

responsibility, LEA avoidance of school difficulties and a government policy of blame the schools / teacher is leading to a situation where teaching and learning in 'tough' schools will be almost impossible in the near future. (Primary, male, 50-9)

- Much of the behaviour arises from the low status conferred on the teaching profession by low pay and damaging remarks from OFSTED, Woodhead, etc. Putnam's prizes do nothing to restore public confidence in the professionalism of teachers. If the profession was respected, young people would aspire to join it. (Secondary, male, 40-9)
- Pupil behaviour reflects a meaner, nastier, more selfish society. Either go for the free market and don't expect schools to have to cater for parents who choose not to raise their children properly or start reminding parents they too have responsibilities. [I've worked in the Sudan so I am NOT blaming poverty!] (Secondary male, 40-9)

Some schools (and some individual teachers) had been able to sidestep the problem by removing themselves from contact with difficult children, but there also remained a number of teachers (especially those working in specialist units for difficult children) who felt that not enough allowance was made by adults for troubled children;

- Ultimately, as a Vol. Aided R.C. school, parents are advised to find another school - we then have a place available which sometimes goes straight to a 'nice' pupil from the school that received our rogue. (Secondary, female, 50-9)
- Schools seem to wish to remain bastions of academic life. Children today can be very troubled by their home circumstances. Teachers may not be the best people to offer support. We need to look at much more play therapy, counselling and help for troubled children. (Centrally employed teacher, female, 50-9)

Responses of individual groups

Older (50+) teachers were less likely to report a range of problems, including threats of third-party violence to pupils, and, threats by parents. However, the general lack of marked differences related to experience is striking (and contrary to expectations at the time the survey was designed), in contrast to the effect of age. It appears that late entrants to the profession make up by their life experience for their lack of teaching experience, or that pupils judge experience from age and act accordingly. Full-time teachers were more likely than part-time or supply teachers to have encountered threats of third-party violence to pupils. Supply teachers received more threats from pupils and parents. This suggest that the more marginal position of supply staff resulted in them encountering more serious threats to the actual conduct of their lessons (there were no differences between types of staff for the most frequent lower-level problems) but otherwise full-time teachers, as the permanent staff, encountered the more serious problems. Middle management, heads of year, curriculum co-ordinators and the leadership group encountered threats of third-party violence more often; again these were the teachers who were most likely to have to take responsibility for dealing with problem outsiders. There were highly significant differences between phases, with almost all behavioural problems significantly more frequent in secondary schools. However there was no significant difference between phases in threat of violence from parents. Pupil-pupil threatened violence and third-party threatened violence was more frequent in cities, and less likely to be reported in rural counties and private schools. The same pattern applied to threats from pupils and threats from parents, though there was some variation in the local authority areas where particular problems were most severe. Overall, the pattern is consistent with *a priori* expectations.

An explanatory model of the responses

Structural modelling, as its name implies, gives an overall picture of the structure of the relationships between all the categories covered in a questionnaire; the advantage of this approach is that it can make allowances for complex interactions between categories. In this case, for example, female teachers are concentrated in primary schools, which have better support systems; structural modelling can indicate which of these three inter-related influences is in fact related to differences in unacceptable behaviour. The large number of questions on different types of unacceptable behaviour and on support available to teachers were grouped into factors to give a more manageable model.

The factor analysis showed four clearly defined factors, reflecting behaviours of different levels of frequency and seriousness. The two aspects of parental threat load onto different factors. The second factor may be termed 'threats and incidents'. It included threats of violence by pupils, pushing and touching, threats of violence by third parties such as parents, and serious incidents. All of these are liable to be highly disturbing to teachers. The third factor can be described as 'violence to pupils', including threatened violence from third parties, and from other pupils. These incidents differ from those in the second factor because threats of pupil-pupil violence, especially, are much more frequent. The first factor, and the one accounting for most variables, may be termed 'frequently encountered' unacceptable behaviour. It contained what may be regarded as the routine behaviours which nowadays disrupt school life - interruptions, answering back, disruption to lessons, refusal to work, offensive language, defiance, conduct violations, dress code violations, abuse / insult, bullying and damage to property. Finally, the fourth factor, 'drugs and weapons' includes traffic in drugs, possession of drugs and possession of offensive weapons - among the most serious, but rarest, incidents.

There are three types of independent variables which could affect teachers' experience of unacceptable behaviour; their own characteristics, such as age and seniority; characteristics of the schools they teach in, such as age-range taught and proportion of pupils receiving free school meals; and features of school and LEA management, such as training and support.

Building the structural model

The model required 'frequent disruptive behaviour' to be separated from the other three, more serious, types of unacceptable behaviour (threats and incidents, violence to pupils, and drugs and weapons). Both types of disruptive behaviour were related to pupil characteristics (only the percentages on the special educational needs register and receiving free school meals had a significant effect, the effects of pupils with English as an additional language and living outside the catchment area being negligible), and to the support available to teachers and pupils (support from senior management to teachers experiencing behaviour problems, teachers' views being taken into account in policy formulation, support for pupils with behaviour problems, support from the LEA), but the proportionate effects were different, though the two types were closely related. Pupil characteristics had a quite strong effect on the more serious types of behaviour, including conflict with parents, and the effect of support was weaker than that of pupil characteristics. Frequent disruption was very strongly related to support, but inversely - good support was related to fewer problems. The effect of pupil characteristics was less than half as strong as that of support. In other words, for the more serious problems, support, though still beneficial, was over-ridden by the effect of the problems pupils brought into the school from outside, but for frequent disruption support could make a significant difference. The relative effect of influences from inside and outside the school is discussed more fully below.

Support was strongly related to age-range, being rated lower in secondary schools than primary and under-5s schools. Women reported better support than men, but this was related to the

higher proportion of women in the primary sector; the direct effect was negligible. In other words primary schools offer better support to their teachers, irrespective of sex, than secondary schools, though this may of course be due to the mainly female staff of primary schools. Pupil characteristics were also more favourable in primary than secondary schools; this could be a cause or effect of the better support available in primary schools (see model page 147).

Discussion

It would be easy to claim that the survey exaggerates the seriousness of the overall problems - some respondents encountered very few problems, though this could result either from their decision to move to more privileged schools or to their school 'unloading' difficult children on to other schools which would not be able to refuse them, due to their under-recruitment. We should also note the comments of a few respondents that a survey of this type tends to encourage respondents to complain about a situation which they might otherwise have tolerated without comment. However several points suggest that the survey has external validity. First, as noted above in the discussion of the sample, the distribution of the sample is closely similar to that of a survey of performance management (Neill 2001a) - which also produced positive comments (supporting the performance management policy initiative). This suggests that neither survey is drawing only on the opinions of hostile and disaffected teachers. The possibility remains that these samples are both biased towards teachers with negative opinions. However the current difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers provide an objective back-up to the written-in comments suggesting that pupil behaviour is a major reason for teachers leaving the profession. Two age-groups must cause particular concern - experienced middle-management teachers, who, as is apparent from the written-in comments, carry much of the burden in practice for dealing with difficult behaviour, and younger teachers who are deciding to get out of the profession while they still have the opportunity to develop a career in a more pleasant working environment. This pattern is consistent with other surveys of teacher stress (e.g. Troman & Woods 2001).

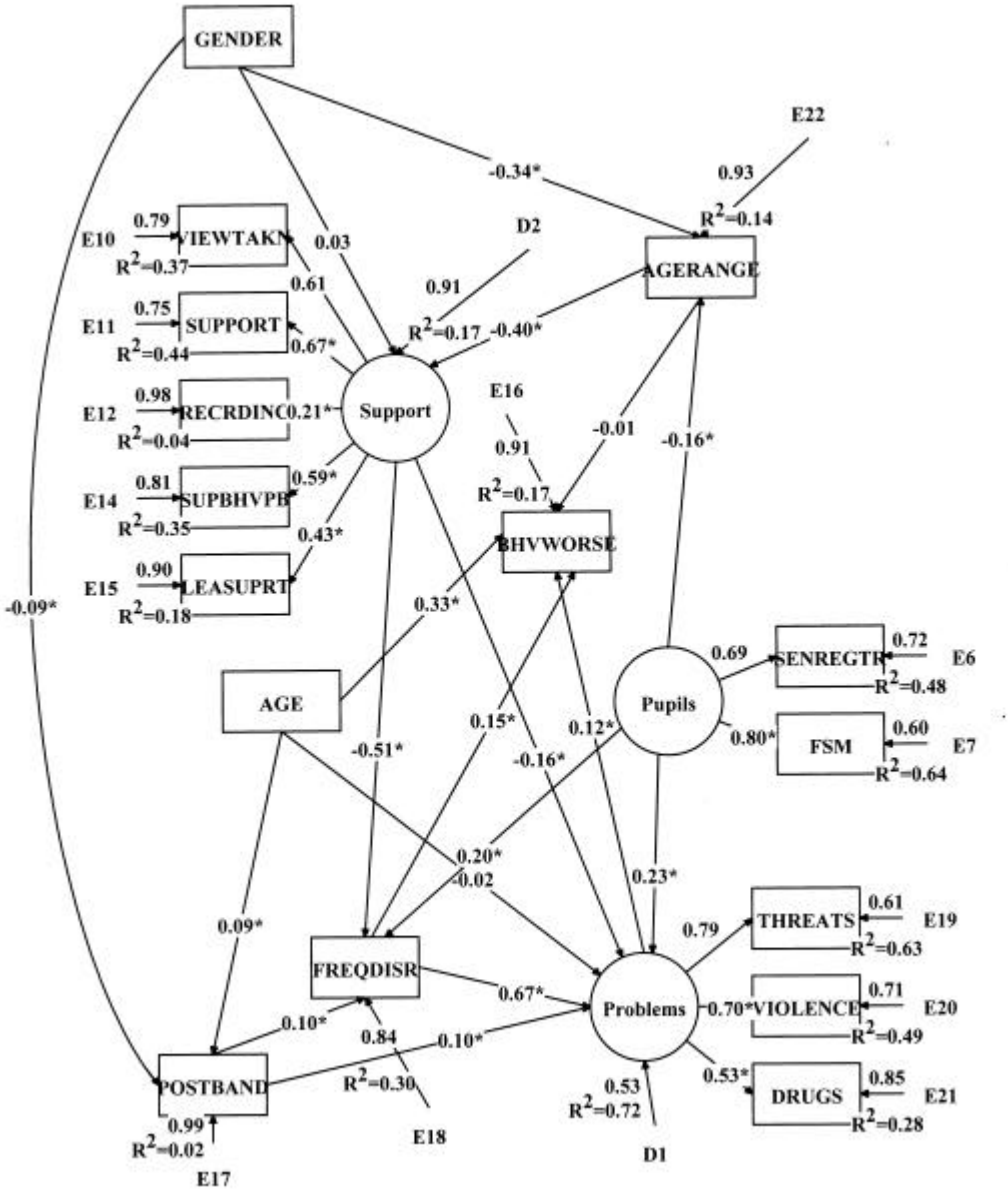
It is clear from the comments of many respondents that problems were not confined to 'difficult' inner-city areas but extended to 'quiet' rural locations - but that in both types of area within-school factors, especially the attitude of senior management, could be critical in the effectiveness of school discipline policies. To an extent, as is apparent from the written-in comments, the attitude of senior management depends on individual personalities and results from decisions taken on appointments at school level, but there are also important factors due to policy impositions. Firstly, there is the burden of bureaucracy, the subject of a previous N.U.T. survey (Neill 1999); senior staff are forced, or decide, to spend time on paperwork rather than actually managing the school. This emphasis is encouraged by the emphasis on accountability and performance indicators such as reducing the number of exclusions and the promotion of inclusion policies. Many comments indicate that senior managers are reluctant to act to exclude difficult pupils, or are under pressure not to do so, and that, where there is no effective support at school or L.E.A. level (often because of financial constraints) middle management and classroom teachers are left to deal with the resulting problems. This reflects in increasing concern with accountability headteachers feel to a range of external stakeholders, including parents(Osborn et. al. 2000), accentuated by the general emphasis by politicians on the rights of parents as consumers on behalf of their children (Labour Party 2001). However it is questionable whether this approach is appropriate for a public service like education, where attendance is compulsory and producers (teachers) are increasingly reluctant to join the profession or stay in post. This issue is now being addressed by the government (Morris 2001, DfEE 2001) but it

remains to be seen whether this will lead to an alteration in the balance between parents and teachers, as there is already a range of legislation which could be used against parents and others who harass teachers (DfEE 2001) but seldom is.

The structural model shows that the relative importance of these effects differs between 'frequent disruption' - the relatively low-level disruption to lessons and other school activities which most respondents experienced on a weekly basis and which they felt interfered with the education of the 'silent majority' of cooperative children - and more serious types of disruption.

'Frequent disruption' related more strongly to effective support in school than to the educational (special needs) and social (free school meals) problems children brought to school. Respondents' written-in comments indicated that effective support and collegiality was critical - some comments indicated that schools in difficult areas could be effective and supportive institutions to work in, while others complained of a lack of support even though the area was not a deprived one - evidence from this survey and elsewhere indicated that difficulties existed even in 'leafy' rural and suburban areas. This suggests that evidence for accountability can interfere with the actual effective functioning of schools; it may also be that the current demands for senior staff to show accountability may discourage effective disciplinarians from taking on these posts (cf. Troman & Woods 2001). Some respondents indicated that they had previously held senior positions and had now moved to less demanding positions. To reduce 'frequent disruption' it may be necessary to make more careful selection of appointments, where possible, at local level, and, at policy level, to reduce the bureaucratic pressure on senior staff which favours paper demonstrations of performance at the cost of actual effectiveness in school management. While the behaviours covered by 'frequent disruption' do not directly involve parents, they are critical to the effective functioning of schools as educational institutions and therefore to the educational effectiveness which parents could reasonably demand.

Both the structural model and written-in comments indicated that the more serious types of unacceptable behaviour were often due to relatively small numbers of children and parents - written-in comments indicating that such children were often indifferent to any of the available sanctions which the school could exercise and that the lack of support available at local authority level meant that schools were having to deal with children for whom they had no effective coping strategy. The current initiatives to increase the sanctions available to teachers (DfEE 2001a,b) may, if carried through, have a desirable effect in increasing the sanctions available and could have a knock-on increasing the acceptance of teachers' authority in respect of the lower-level 'frequent disruption'. The importance of reducing both types is evident from the written-in comments by teachers who are planning to leave the profession. It is not surprising that some teachers who have suffered assaults become disenchanted and intend to move to jobs where they are not at risk in this way; but it is also evident that low-level disruption wears teachers down and leads to them abandoning teaching. The pervasive problem of lack of respect for teachers among pupils and parents seems likely to be the more difficult of the two issues to solve in a climate where deference towards institutions and their representatives in general has decreased (Troman & Woods 2001), and as some respondents pointed out, this is a problem for society as a whole.


GENDER
E22
0.93
R2=0.14
-0.34*
E10
0.79
VIEWTAKN
R2=0.37
0.03
D2
AGERANGE
0.61
0.91
E11
0.75
SUPPORT
R2=0.44
0.67*
R2=0.17
-0.40*
E12
0.98
RECRDINC
R2=0.04
0.21*
Support
E16
0.91
R2=0.17
-0.01
-0.16*
E14
0.81
SUPBHVPB
R2=0.35
0.59*
BHVWORSE
0.43*
E15
0.90
LEASUPRT
R2=0.18
-0.09*
0.33*
0.69
SENREGTH
0.72
E6
R2=0.48
AGE
Pupils
0.15*
0.12*
0.80*
FSM
0.60
E7
R2=0.64
-0.51*
-0.16*
0.20*
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0.23*
0.09*
0.79
THREATS
0.61
E19
R2=0.63
FREQDISR
0.67*
Problems
0.70*
VIOLENCE
0.71
E20
R2=0.49
0.10*
0.84
0.10*
0.53*
DRUGS
0.85
E21
R2=0.28
POSTBAND
R2=0.30
0.53
R2=0.72
0.99
R2=0.02
E18
D1
E17

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Working with challenging parents within the framework of inclusive education

Kees van der Wolf & Tanja van Beukering

'Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building and inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.' (Article 2, Salamanca Statement)

The movement toward total inclusion of special needs children into regular classrooms will require teachers to cope with increasingly diverse groups of students and parents. As the diversity (and severity) of student characteristics increase, it can be expected that the frequency and intensity of student-teacher en of parent-teacher incompatibility will also increase. It is important to provide a method for quantifying the compatibility or incompatibility between teacher, parent and child, as well as to develop some practical ideas to cope with challenging parents of children with special educational needs.
In this article we firstly consider the concepts of inclusion and integration. Further we discuss the Salamanca-statement and some recommendable policies regarding inclusion. Then we take a look at some results from studies on teacher problems and stress in teachers, related to 'difficult children' and their parents. We finish by analyzing some school-family-interaction problems and by giving some recommendations for working with challenging parents.

Inclusion versus integration
Inclusion as a concept is fairly new. Its origins lie in its use approximately a decade ago in the USA. (Ferguson, 1997). Since then it has become one of the key features of discussion in the literature of Special Needs Education. Sebba & Sachdev (1997) make distinctions between inclusive and integrative education.

> Inclusive education describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring its curricular organization and provision and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils.

This stresses the whole-school nature of the concept and the demands of reconfiguring regular schooling. The building of an inclusive school community is to reconstruct whole-school provision, not the provision for special needs students only.

Integration, on the other hand, is usually applied to groups of students with exceptional needs having access and placement in a mainstream or regular school setting. This does not emphasize the restructuring of the

whole teaching/learning and other processes; rather it recognizes the need for individual programmes for these students. As Sebba and Sachdev (1999) note:

> The organization and curricular provision for the rest of the school population remains essentially the same as it was prior to the 'integrated' pupils arrival.

Salamanca

Salamanca and governmental initiatives

In 1994 representatives of 88 national governments and 25 international organizations concerned with education met in Salamanca, Spain, under the auspices of UNESCO. In the Salamanca Statement and Framework on Special Needs Education (Porter, 1997) five principles of children's rights are mentioned:

'We believe and proclaim that:

- every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning;
- every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs;
- education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs;
- those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs (..)'.

Governments were advised to:

- give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties;
- adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise;
- develop demonstration projects and encourage exchanges with countries having experience with inclusive schools;
- establish decentralized and participatory mechanisms for planning, monitoring and evaluating educational provision for children and adults with special education needs;
- encourage and facilitate t he participation of parents, communities and organization of persons with disabilities in the planning and decision making processes concerning provision for special educational needs;
- invest greater effort in early identification and intervention strategies, as well as in vocational aspects of inclusive education;
- ensure that, in the context of a systemic change, teacher education programmes, both pre-service and in-service, address the provision of special needs education in inclusive schools.

The accompanying 'framework for action' noticed that realizing the goal of successful education of children with special educational needs (SEN) is not the task of Ministries of Education alone. It requires the co-operation of families, and the mobilization of the community as a whole, and voluntary organizations.

So, the 'Salamanca-framework' observes that the education of children with special educational needs is a shared task of parents and professionals. A positive attitude on the part of parents favors school and social integration. Parents need support in order to assume the role of a parent of a child with special needs.

A co-operative, supportive partnership between school administrators, teachers and parents should be developed and parents regarded as active partners in decision-making. Parents should be encouraged to participate in educational activities at home and at school (where they could observe effective techniques and learn how to organize extra-curricular activities), as well as in the supervision and support of their children's learning.

Barriers to collaboration

Educators, parents, policy-makers and researchers generally agree that parent involvement is very important.

However, according to Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms (1986), there are several barriers that limit a fruitful cooperation.

Parents believe that teachers teach too much by rote, parent-teacher conferences are routine and unproductive, teachers send home only bad news, teachers do not follow through on what they say they will do, they do not welcome interactions with parents, and they care more about discipline than about teaching. Teachers, on the other side, believe that parents are not interested in school, they do not show up when asked, they promise but do not follow through, they only pretend to understand what teachers are trying to accomplish, and they worry too much about how other kids are doing.

The diverse and sometimes contradictory demands placed upon teachers, over extended periods of time, lead to *stress in teachers.* Teachers are often confronted with high demands and low rewards. Each day brings its quota of problems, from students who lack the motivation for learning to parents who are critical. In an extensive piece of research conducted by Brown & Ralph (1992) the findings indicated that the relationship with parents and the wider community emerged as an important work-related stress-factor. The aspects named were as follows:

- parental pressure to achieve good results
- anxiety over test and examination results
- the threat of performance management systems
- additional work demands outside the normal school hours, which could lead to conflict with family and friends
- poor status and pay
- biased media coverage
- being obliged to accommodate unrealistic expectations
- general societal cynicism about the role of teachers

Interactional problems with students and parents have been shown to be significant and universal teaching stressors. The Index of Teaching Stress (Greene, Abidin & Kmetz, 1997) was developed under the assumption that that the level of a teacher's distress regarding the specific behaviors of a given student is not merely a reflection of the frequency of the behaviors.

In their study each teacher was asked to respond to the items twice: once for a current student of their choosing with 'behavioral or emotional problems' (i.e., 'behaviorally challenging students') and once for the seventh student on their class roster (referred to hereafter as 'comparison students').

In part A (Teacher Response to Student Behaviors) teachers rated (on a 5-point Likert-scale) the degree to which they found 47 problematic behaviors to be stressful or frustrating as applied to each student being rated. In responding to each item, the teachers were asked to degree to which the behaviors were felt to be stressful or frustrating in interactions with each student.

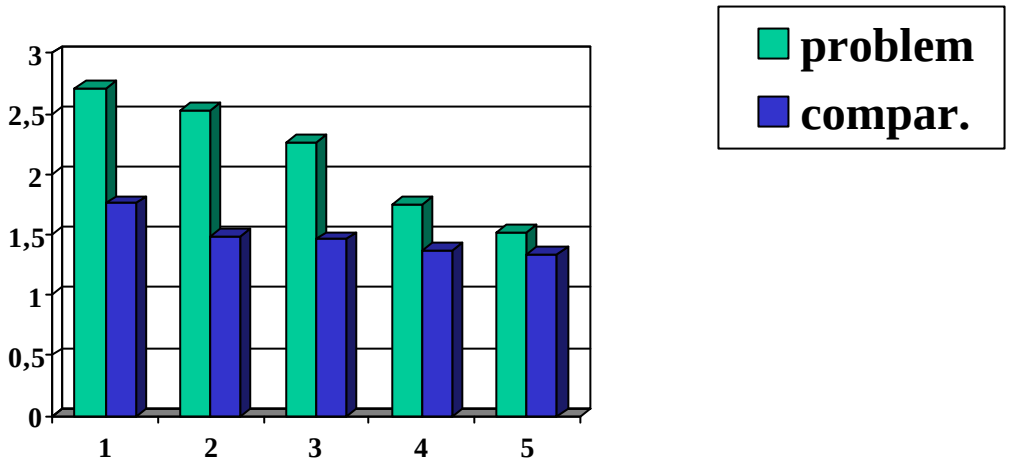
In part B (Teacher Perceptions of Interactions/Self-Efficacy), teachers were asked to rate 43 statements (on a 5-point Likert scale), which explored (a) their perceptions of the impact of the student upon the teacher and the teaching process, (b) their sense of efficacy and satisfaction in working with the student, and (c) the nature of their interactions with other adults involved with the student (e.g., the *student's parents*).

This part of the questionnaire, it was theorized, would tap teachers' perceptions of the effect of the student on the teaching process, learning environment, and the teachers' sense of satisfaction and efficacy.

Replicating the Greene, Abidin & Kmetz-research, after translating the items into Dutch, we asked 60 Amsterdam-teachers to fill in the questionnaire. They were primarily employed in elementary school settings with children from low income groups.

Here we present the results regarding the 'frustration with parents'-scale.

Figure 1 - 'Frustration with parents'



1 = parents do not seem concerned by child's behavior
2 = unable to agree with parents re: handling child
3 = interacting with parents is frustrating
4 = I feel harassed by parents of child
5 = Parents call to tell me they are unhappy

In the pilot-study[i] we found that 'frustration with parents' foremost is influenced by factors like lack of concern on the part of the parents, not getting agreement re handling the child and a frustrating interaction with the parents. Obviously, it is not very common that parents call the school to complain. Teachers don't often feel harassed by parents.
This part of the research focuses on the impact of parents of 'problem-students' on the teaching process and teachers' self-efficacy, perceptions of support, and satisfaction from teaching. The information obtained via this approach permits examination of the degree to which the style of behaving of parents is incompatible with the expectations, demands and other characteristics of a given teacher.
Working with challenging parents
By focusing on aspects of the teaching process that are distressing to teachers in this part of our study, the relation with parents this kind of research may prove useful as a gauge of student-parent-teacher compatibility. But there are other salient results.
Seligman (2000) concluded that teachers view parents more negatively than parents perceive

teachers. He therefore emphasizes that 'problem parents' can also take a 'problem-position' because of a conflicting interaction between the two parties (teacher and parent), caused by impropriate and unprofessional teacher behavior.
However, he gives some interesting ideas with respect to working with challenging parents. Seligman distinguishes 11 types of troublesome parent behavior. He describes some indicators, backgrounds and relevant teacher-reactions. We here summarize his analyses and recommendations.

1. Hostile parents
   - have angry feelings towards the teacher, the school, or the curriculum
   - accuse teacher of failing to cope with or teach the child
   - (sometimes) have negative experiences with other professionals

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - avoid responding in a hostile or defensive way
   - the skill of listening is a powerful and positive response
   - understand that parent behavior reflects both anger and hurt
   - give your observations in an objective, noncontentious way

2. Uncooperative parents
   - parents are preoccupied with family or work-related problems
   - avoidance may be the parent's way to keep anxiety about the problems the child has at a manageable level
   - are emotionally challenged or otherwise impaired
   - are still denying or having difficulty coming to terms with their child's disability
   - because of their modest education some parents are concerned to contact school
   - perceive that teachers consider them to be a burden and as a consequence avoid school

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - attract and welcome parents, don't frighten them
   - remain optimistic and realistic
   - don't try to thrust reality to parents when they are not prepared to accept it
   - make the parents feel welcome
   - understand, not challenge, the fact that parents are very preoccupied with demanding jobs, etc.
   - don't pressure parents to have more frequent contacts with the school
   - write a conveying interest in meeting with the parent
   - occasionally phone the parents
   - keep trying to get contact!

3. Perfectionistic (or excessively worried) parents
   - are overly involved with the development of the child
   - express dismay to the child and the teacher when tasks are accomplished in a less than perfect way
   - the child develops a negative attitude toward schoolwork because of the criticism he receives whenever his performance falls below his parents' standard

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - don't try (in advance) to work toward a relaxation of the parents' unrealistically high standard
   - describe in clear and understandable terms the nature of the child's learning problem, his limitations, and his potential
   - explain that children react differently to pressure
   - mention that praise and support is potent source of motivation

- avoid to indicate that the parent is at fault for the child's performance

4. Professional parents
   - consciously or unconsciously use their knowledge in a controlling or condescending way
   - are sophisticated at manipulating the system
   - sometimes annoy teachers by letting them feel that their knowledge about school, teaching, or educating children with disabilities give them license to be very critical to the teacher and the curriculum

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - when receiving unsolicited advice from professional parents weigh the advice to determine its merit and don't cast it automatically aside
   - involve the parent in your classroom if you believe that the parent can function collaboratively
   - try to continue the dialogue so that feelings and perceptions of both parties become clear
   - remember always that you are a trained specialist in teaching children, whereas the parent may be a specialist in another field.

5. Dependent parents
   - ask questions about virtually every aspect of the child' s life and enlist the help of the teacher in both minor and major matters
   - will solicit the teacher's opinions instead of risking her own; they rarely take the opportunity to engage in independent thinking and subsequent responsibility
   - generally cooperate with the teacher, although only when the teacher assumes responsibilities for decisions and course of action

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - excessively dependent parents are frightened; don't heighten their anxiety by turning away from them, gradually wean them away from their dependency
   - reinforce their decisions and actions
   - be careful, you can easily be seduced into a relationship with someone who has strong dependency needs.

6. Overly helpful parents
   - excessively helpful parents are motivated by their need to be useful - a need that may be developed in their past
   - parents may have developed over functioning tendencies because of, for instance, chronic illness in the family or an parent who was demanding.

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - communicate, in a sensitive and positive way, that only a limited amount of assistance is needed
   - try to reduce the amount of time spent by the parent

7. Overprotective parents
   - anxious about their child's welfare (academic progress, concerns around protection against physical and psychological harm)
   - fearful attitude about most things
   - due to feelings of guilt (because of the disability of the child), overprotecting the child

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - suggest more realistic, growth promoting practices
   - reinforce child initiated independent actions

- suggest activities that facilitate independent thinking and living

8. Neglectful parents
   - are preoccupied with other family members or problems
   - (sometimes) rejecting the child because of the disability or because he is not wanted
   - neglect may be the consequence of a lifestyle (e.g., alcoholism, drugs abuse)
   - mistakenly equate neglect with independence
   - compound lack of cooperation with the school by not providing the child with the essential emotional ingredients
   - (sometimes) lack of parental skills, combined with immaturity

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - (in severe cases) inform the school social worker or principal
   - demonstrate concern with the child both verbally, and (when appropriate) physically (a hug or pat on the back)
   - set up situations in the classroom in which the child is included in group activities and sometimes assumes a position of leadership
   - continue attempts to engage the parents
   - avoid blaming the parent for the child's problem
   - (in case of withholding of food, adequate shelter, clothes) use a more direct approach
   - (if possible) let parents benefit from training and education in parenting skills

9. Parents as clients
   - seek help for themselves from their child's teacher, because she is physically available
   - are confused by the array of titles of professional assistants (psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, etc.)
   - don't seek professional help because of the stigma attached to doing so.

   Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
   - know your professional limitations, but show concern about the parents
   - make a distinction about whether the parent needs someone to be supportive, or someone who is trained to provide psychotherapy
   - make the parents aware that their problems appear to need psychological attention and that you are not professionally prepared to be of assistance
   - if a referral is indicated, don't make personal recommendations other than an agency, hospital or professional society.

10. Fighting parents
    - argue with each other during conferences
    - the arguments may be the consequence of having partial information or information that is perceived differently

    Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes
    - void taking sites
    - don't act like a marriage counselor
    - try not get involved in heated arguments
    - try to discriminate between expression of major problems, minor disagreements, and diverse styles of interpersonal interactions

11. Involved-uninvolved parents
    - fail to carry out agreed-upon courses of action
    - want to be helpful and cooperative, but they find it difficult to initiate action decided upon
    - actually feel that home activities fall within the scope of the classroom
    - parents think that they cannot adequately perform the tasks agreed upon

Advisable teacher behavior/attitudes

- be sure that that own frustration and anger not become an impediment to effective communication
- don't blame the parents for the slow development of the child
- don't point out the discrepancy between what parents said they would do and what they actually do
- explain how additional help at home is particularly important for children with disabilities
- never pressure parents to work with their child at home.

Epilogue

Inclusivity concerns not only visions of a technical and social nature, but also a balance between demands of individual children's and parents' needs and teachers' and school-quality. In this chapter we discuss the inclusion-movement, highly influenced by the 1994 Salamanca-conference, and related policy-recommendations.

Inclusion of special needs children into regular classrooms will require teachers to cope with increasingly diverse groups of students and parents.

We discuss several factors that challenge teacher functioning and effective home-school relations in inclusive schools. Further, we give some results of a pilot-study aimed at quantifying and understanding teacher stress and problems in teacher-student-parent-interactions. We finish by giving some recommendations for working with so called 'problem-parents'.

Though we should be careful not characterizing parents of SEN-children with negative labels, it can be helpful to describe 'good practice' in working with parents of 'problem children'.

It is important to be aware of causal factors that influence teacher's perceptions, '..because only through such understanding will teachers be in a better position to appraise parents' behavior accurately' (Seligman, 2000, p. 227). Both parents and teachers may need support and encouragement in learning to work together as equal partners.

Note

1 Data collection carried out by my student Monique Brown.

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Teachers, power relativism and partnership

Pirjo Nuutinen

Background and objectives

The project 'What teachers think about their power' was started in cooperation with student teachers in 1995 with semi-structured interviews among 22 kindergarten and comprehensive school teachers in Finland. We were interested in teachers' power thinking after realizing that ordinary teachers themselves rarely participated in discussions which dealt with education, power and teacherhood. In our first interviews we wanted to know

- how teachers conceive power and its meaning in human existence,
- what they think about their professional autonomy, and
- what they think about using power in their work with children and youth.

After that, several substudies including three surveys have been carried out (see Appendix 1).

One of the most important theoretical problems of the project is how to describe teachers' intellectual orientations to power in general and to use of power in educating young people. On the basis of the material collected in the project it is obvious, that there is no special consistent ways of power thinking shared by all teachers. Although on certain issues, as in assessing decision makers and administrators, a great majority of teachers seem to agree with each other (see Nuutinen 1997a , 1997b, 1999), there appear, behind the official and quite consistent educational framework, in teachers' practical thinking, ideological differences, implying even conflicting ideas and, among other things, quite unexpected interpretations, for example, of small children's and youth's abilities to make decisions and to take responsibility. This is not an unexpected finding, because power relations are constructed in everyday social settings and teachers make their decisions in unique situations in which also other parties influence on proceeding of the process, where using power takes place. However, we do not know very much about teachers' different dispositions in this respect. The aim of this article is to shed light on the issues, what kind of attitudes Finnish kindergarten and comprehensive school teachers have towards power in general philosophical meaning and how their attitudes are related to their ideas about partnership and using power.

About the methodology

Teachers´ attitudes towards power in a general, abstract meaning, were measured in surveys with the semantic differential (Osgood 1969), which is a quantitative scale technique using opposite attributes describing the object of attitude (example next page). This method implies similar difficulties than the Likert technique discussed, for example, by Ronkainen (1999) and Toivonen & Haavio (1969; see also Edwards 1957). Toivonen and Haavio (1969) made three successive surveys, which were similar except for the verbal formulations for don't know' or 'cannot say' - options and compared the results. They found out that the results of the factor analyses of these three surveys were different, although nothing had been changed except the verbal formulation of one option. Ronkainen criticizes social researches for not paying attention to different possible meanings of *'cannot say'* -type answers and for treating them as quite useless nonclasses. Ronkainen mentions

that Likert - type techniques compel respondents to make choices between simplistic black or white options and do not leave room for a more reflective and complicated thinking (1999, 168). In the context of power research different verbal formulations for 'cannot say' -options and interpretations given to these formulations by researchers and respondents, can be related to a wider context of the power behavior. For example, making classifications and classifying as such imply use of power (Deschamps 1982). The decision to answer and choose one of the given options can be related to a wider conscious intention to influence on the construction of social representation and decision making. Withdrawing, not knowing or being unable to say can be influential strategies ('The Silent Majority') or a way of self - protection.

In 1995 the teachers were requested in semi-structured interviews to describe their attitudes towards power by asking whether it was a good or a bad thing. The analysis of the semi-structured material suggested that there were a few teachers who thought that whether power was a good or a bad thing, *depended on who uses it, with what morality and with what results* (Nuutinen 1997). This point was first noticed in surveys (1996 - 97), in which teachers' attitudes towards power were measured with the semantic differential, by reformulating the alternative 'cannot say' into the form 'cannot say or both attributes are valid' (see the example below).

Semantic differential (Example from version 1, survey 1996)

Power is...						
Creative	1	2	3	4	5	Destructive
Deceitful	1	2	3	4	5	Trustworthy
Repressive	1	2	3	4	5	Liberating
(totally 14 items)						

1 = fully agree with the left attribute
2 = almost agree with the left attribute
3 = cannot say or both attributes are valid
4 = almost agree with the right attribute
5 = fully agree with the right attribute

Semantic differential: version 2 (1999)

Power is...							
Creative	1	2	3	4	5	*	Destructive
Deceitful	1	2	3	4	5	*	Trustworthy
Repressive	1	2	3	4	5	*	Liberating
(totally 14 items)							

1 = fully agree with the left attribute
2 = almost agree with the left attribute
3 = agree both with the left and the right attribute
4 = almost agree with the right attribute
5 = fully agree with the right attribute
* = cannot say

Table 1 shows how the proportion of 'cannot say' -answers decreases, when the teachers were offered an opportunity to express their relativistic attitude. The possible consequences of the result are interesting. If we choose this perspective, most of the 'cannot say' teachers cannot be regarded as not knowing or neutral, as persons without a clear attitude, but rather as actors reflecting more or less actively in different contexts. They can adopt and change attitudes on the basis of moral assessment or of calculations of power positions, means, ends and results. (Nuutinen 2000)

Table 1 - Percentages of 'cannot say or both' -answers
(Surveys 1996, 1997 and 1999; ranges on 14 items)

	Survey -96	Survey -97	Survey - 99
'Cannot say ...'	29.0 - 49.1	27.8 - 53.2	0.3 - 3.4
Both positive and negative (relativistic; separated from cannot say option)			21.4 - 39.4

At first, in the following pages a report is given how l the teachers, who participated in the survey in 1999 were classified into three types according. to their attitudes towards power. Then the different teacher groups' beliefs and opinions about education, power and partnership will be described on the basis of the cross-tabulations and two factor analyses. Finally the typology of teachers' power thinking will be compared to the teacher types constructed in the earlier study presented at the ERNAPE conference in 1999, in Amsterdam.

Classification of the teachers

From the point of view of the semantic differential method, which is a quantitative scale technique, the solution used in version 2 is not acceptable. That is why in the further analysis 'cannot say' and relativistic options are reunited. Yet, it is good to remember that there are not very many teachers who 'cannot say', if the relativistic option is available.

In order to classify teachers, a sum variable based on 14 items of semantic differential was constructed, the sums were divided with the number of items and further classified in three classes according to teachers' attitudes to power in general (variable ATTCLASS/ATTYPE). The classes are

1. teachers with positive attitudes (values 1 - 2.33; 22.0% of all),
2. relativistic/uncertain teachers (values 2.34 - 3.67; 67.6% of all) and
3. teachers with negative attitudes towards power (values 3.68 - 5; 10.4% of all).

The teachers with positive attitudes towards power are tending to think that power can be characterized as a natural, systematic, creative, useful, cooperative, reasonable, emphatic etc. phenomenon, while the teachers with negative attitudes describe it with opposite attributes and think that it is as such a harmful phenomenon . The relativistic/uncertain teachers tend to choose both negative and positive attributes and to condition their choice to a wider situational context. However, this classification needs further developing because the current sum variable does not differentiate relativistic/uncertain teachers from those who have chosen variably *extreme* positive and negative options and thus are different from those who choose option 'both attributes are valid'.

Chi square -tests related to the cross tabulations of ATTYPE by age (p =.604), school level (p =.616) and rural vs. urban teachers (p= .700) did not show any statistically significant differences in regard to teacher types. The value of the significance in the cross tabulation of ATTYPE by gender slightly exceeds the lowest acceptable value of significance .05 (Chi square = 5.825; df = 2; p =.054). The comparison between the female and the male teachers' distributions show that the proportion of female teachers is smaller among type 1 teachers (positive attitudes) and larger among type 3 teachers (negative attitudes towards power) than that of male teachers.

In the following analysis the main questions are whether these teacher types think differently about power issues in education, and especially how relativistic/uncertain teachers' thinking could be characterized.

*Table 2 - Percentages of teachers agreeing with the claims about the meaning of power for humans and society**

	Positive	Relativistic/ uncertain	Negative	p
The social life would be continuous chaos without power.	60.3	**64.3**	35.2	.002
Solidarity and good will are typical of all humans.	59.7	**32.6**	37.8	.001
Those with power are exceptionally talented.	44.9	26.2	10.8	.002
The citizens are divided by the power structure of the society into those who subjugate and those who submit.	39.8	61.7	73.0	.024
All humans are born free and equal.	43.6	**30.8**	32.4	.018
Men are more dominating than women by nature.	44.9	**48.3**	45.9	.616
All humans are submissive by nature	24.4	27.1	27.0	.547
Children are altruistic and do not want power.	34.6	**19.2**	37.8	.053

* Table is based on wider cross tabulations and Chi square - tests.

Table 2 shows that the opinions of the different teacher types can fluctuate without any clear consistency depending on the item in question. The relativistic/uncertain teacher group seems to favor a middle- of- the- road position on items 3 and 4. This group is more positive than the positive type teachers in the item 'The social life were continuous chaos without power' (1) and more negative than negative type teachers in items (2, 5, 8) about human nature.

In all three surveys a very large majority of the teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the politicians and administrators (Nuutinen 1999). Differences in the opinions about the suitability of the amount of power of different partners between teacher types are shown in table 3.

*Table 3 - Percentage of teachers wishing for changes in different partners' amount of power by types**

	Positive (T1)	Relativistic/ uncertain (T2)	Negative (T3)	p =
School/social service board	39.7	43.9	48.1	.665
Politicians (municipal level)	61.6	67.2	89.3	.022
Politicians (state level)	46.6	55.5	82.1	.006
Administrators (municipal level)	53.4	50.9	78.6	.041
Administrators (state level)	42.5	47.3	75.0	.059
Headmaster	36.1	42.0	50.0	.341
Colleagues	45.2	40.0	44.4	.014
Children	26.0	27.9	28.6	.543
Parents	28.8	37.0	42.9	.439

*Table is based on wider cross tabulations and Chi square - tests.

There is quite a large proportion of teachers in every teacher type who wish for changes in different partners amount of power: 1) positive type ranging from 26% to 61.6%, 2) relativistic /uncertain type from 27.9 % to 67.2 % and 3) negative type from 28.6 % to 89.3% (Table 3). The relativistic/uncertain teachers represent a middle- of- the- road attitude. The general trend remains the same as in the earlier surveys: the teachers are less satisfied with the amount of power of politicians and administrators than with that of partners working at school/kindergarten and parents. In addition to that, as shown in Table 4, most of them would like to reduce politicians' and administrators' power and to increase the other (grassroot) partners' power (Nuutinen 1997a, 1997b, 1999). Yet, there are intragroup differences in teachers' opinions about whether the power of above mentioned partners should be increased or reduced.

*Table 4 - Percentage of teachers wishing for different partners' power to be increased (+) or reduced (- by types**

	Positive (T1)		Relativistic/ uncertain (T2)		Negative (T3)	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
School/social service board	15.1	24.7	18.0	25.9	11.1	37.0
Politicians (municipal level)	12.3	49.3	6.1	61.1	14.3	75.0
Politicians (state level)	9.6	37.0	5.7	49.8	17.9	64.2
Administrators (municipal level)	20.5	32.9	14.5	36.4	17.9	60.7
Administrators (state level)	9.6	32.9	11.1	36.3	17.9	57.1
Headmaster	29.2	6.9	30.5	11.5	28.6	21.4
Colleagues	45.2	0.0	31.7	8.3	44.4	0.0
Children	20.5	5.5	20.5	7.4	28.6	0.0
Parents	21.9	6.8	29.1	7.8	39.3	3.6

*Table is based on wider cross tabulations and Chi square – tests

The teacher types and the issues of power in education

Factor analysis 1

In the survey of 1999 teachers' thoughts about power in education were measured with 21 Likert -type items (Appendix 2), of which twelve were chosen in two factor analyses. The aim of the first analysis was 1) to find out what kind of latent variables could be extracted from twelve variables chosen and 2) to compare the teacher types with the help of these new variables. The first analysis included all cases (n = 364). A four-factor solution was accepted on the basis of eigenvalues, factor scores were computed and the means of the scores of the different teacher types were compared with the one- way variance analysis.

On the grounds of the highest loadings the first latent variable (factor 1; see Table 5) is named as *Factor of Professional Power 1* emphasizing teacher expertise and the kindergarten's or school's aims over parents' and students' opinions.

Table 5 - Factor of Professional Power vs. Partnership 1 (factor 1).

Variables	Loadings
The parents do not understand the teacher's work well enough to be able to say how their children should be educated (24).	0.604
The teachers who allow pupils to participate in planning their work mislead them, because the kindergarten/school cannot work on the basis of pupils wishes (22).	0.560
My pupils cannot tell their needs for learning and education (21)	0.548
If the use of power helps to reach the goals of learning and education, the teacher can use also severe methods (23).	0.446
Laymen, e.g. parents, should avoid teaching school matters to children, because they usually do not know the proper methods (13).	0.405

A comparison of the factor score means of the different teacher types points out that relativistic/ uncertain teachers put more stress on professional power than the other types (the difference between the positive and the relativistic/uncertain type is significant at statistical level p = .016).

Table 6 - Factor of Didactic Authority 1 (factor 2)

Variables	Loadings
The teachers have to take care that pupils internalize the goals of the kindergarten/school (4).	0.814
The teachers have to know their subject so well that the pupils cannot question their authority (5).	0.482

The second latent variable is named as *Factor of Didactic Authority 1* emphasizing teachers' duties as a mediators of the goals of formal education to the children and as authorities of the curriculum (Table 5). The value of the relativistic/uncertain teacher type's factor score mean is a ' middle- of-the- road' - value. The positive and negative type teachers differ at the statistically significant level.

Table 7 - Factor of Power Conflicts 1 (factor 3)

Variables	Loadings
The teacher's moral principles and use of power often contradict each other in the kindergarten/school work (29).	0.546
Nowadays the teachers lack means to solve various kinds of children's problems (28).	0.499
The goals of the kindergarten/school and the children's needs match (3).	-0.436
At present self- discipline is not emphasized enough by Finnish education (25).	0.385

The third factor, *Factor of Power Conflicts 1* refers to teachers' difficulties to adapt to the aims and principles of formal education and the use of power while interacting with young people (Table 7). Of the different teacher types the relativistic/uncertain group stresses the power conflicts most. The difference between them and positive type teachers is significant at .000 -level. The negative type teachers' factor score mean is quite near the value of the relativistic/uncertain type.

Table 8 - Factor of Partnership and Limits of Expert Power 1 (factor 4)

Variables	Loadings
It is the most advantageous for the child to have two separate territories, home and kindergarten/school (19)	0.925
[Laymen, e.g. parents, should avoid teaching school matters to children, because they usually do not know the proper methods (13)].	(-0.225)

Only one variable was highly loaded on factor 4 stressing the separateness of kindergarten/school and home (*Factor of Partnership and Limits of Expert Power 1***;** Table 8). The negative loading of variable 13 suggests idea that the possible latent variable could deal with partnership - non partnership dimension related to the limits of stressing professional expertise. No statistically significant differences between teacher types were found.

Factor analysis 2

Factor analysis 2 with the same items used in the first analysis, was limited to the relativistic/uncertain teachers (n = 224). A four factor solution was accepted on the basis of eigenvalues in this case too, and except for a few changes in the factors' percentages of variance the interpretations of the latent variables and naming of the factors have remained the same as in the analysis 1. In analysis 2, factor scores with means and ANOVA were computed in order to describe how the relativistic/uncertain teachers differ from each other on latent variables when gender, age and school level are taken into account.

Table 9 - Significance of subgroup differences on latent variables factor score means (ANOVA)

	Gender p =	Age p =	School level p =
Professional Power vs. Partnership 2	.060	.121	.000
Didactic Authority 2	.889	.000	.000
Partnership and Limits of Expert Power 2	.849	.856	.528
Power Conflicts 2	.401	.208	.000

As seen in Table 9 there are not any statistically significant differences between male and female relativist/uncertain teachers on latent variables. The relativist/uncertain teachers of different age and school levels disagree on the issue of didactic authority. The teachers who are 50 years old or younger emphasize didactic authority less than those over 50 years of age. In addition to the didactic authority, the school level subgroup differences also appear on factors of Professional Power vs. Partnership 2 and Power Conflicts 2. Post hoc -tests point out that relativist/uncertain kindergarten teachers stress professional power, didactic authority and power conflicts less than comprehensive school lower and upper level teachers.

Power attitudes and sharing power: a comparison of the two typologies

In the earlier article (Nuutinen 1999) three teacher types were presented: those who were 1) positively, 2) reservedly and 3) negatively disposed to the parents' expertise and power partnership. Of all teachers 22.2% belonged to the positively disposed type, 68.1% to the reserved type and 9.7% to the negatively disposed type. The teachers who participated in the survey in 1999 were classified using the same method. Now the proportion of the positively disposed teachers was larger than earlier (37.8%) which consequently implied fewer cases for the other types (T2/reserved 58.2%, T3/negative 4.0%). A comparison by sex, age, school level and position (headmaster/ordinary teacher) points out statistically significant differences between different age groups (the oldest teachers have a reserved or negative orientation more often), between school levels (comprehensive school upper level teachers are reservedly or negatively orientated more often) and between ordinary teachers and headmasters (the latter are less reserved and show no negative disposition at all). An interesting question is how teachers´ power attitudes and sharing power with parents are related. The divisions of the two typologies were cross tabulated. As shown in Table 10

Table 10 - Cross tabulation of the two teacher typologies (% of all; n = 329)

	Sharing power Type 1 (positive)	Sharing power Type 2 (reserved)	Sharing power Type 3 (negative)
Positive attitudes to power (T 1)	12.2	9.1	0.6
Relativistic attitudes (T2)	23.1	43.2	3.8
Negative attitudes (T3)	3.3	4.9	0.3

Type 2/2 (relativistic/uncertain and reserved) is the most general, almost every second teacher was classified into this group A little more than every fifth teacher belongs to the type 2/1 (relativistic/uncertain power attitude and positive orientation to the parents). About every tenth teacher was positively disposed both to power and parents, and almost the same proportion positively to power but reservedly to the parents.

Discussion

The starting point of the study of teachers' power attitudes suggested that ordinary methods of measuring attitudes towards power ought to be complemented with a method which is able to differentiate types and styles beyond 'cannot say', 'don't know' etc. options. The solution used here is rough, but fruitful, and can be developed further.

Two thirds of all kindergarten and comprehensive school teachers who participated in the survey in 1999 were classified in the class of the relativistic/uncertain teachers. One can conclude that a majority of teachers seem to avoid extreme stands and possibly adapt and change attitudes in a process, in which they reflect their roles in power relations, morality or the rules of use of power, and calculate potential results of the use of power. However, the relativistic/uncertain teachers are not consistently ' middle of the road' persons. From certain aspects, this group seems to conceive the meaning of power for humans even more negatively than the negative type teachers. The two factor analyses which showed that four factors could be extracted from the variables measuring teachers' opinions and beliefs about power and education, also point towards similar tendencies. Analysis 1, which included all cases, made explicit the factors of professional power vs. partnership, didactic authority, power conflicts and partnership and limits of expert power. The above metaphor of the relativistic teachers as 'middle of the road' persons fits to the factor of didactic authority well, but not the factors of professional power vs. partnership and power conflicts and partnership, which were given more emphasis by this than by the other teacher types.

In her study Ronkainen found out that the 'cannot-say' type hesitation and uncertainty were related to gender, action culture and age. Women, people working in rural vocations and elder people gave more often 'cannot say' answers than men, people in urban vocations or younger people, and this tendency seemed to be quite consistent on different subject areas (1999, 170 - 171). On the basis of this study the proportion of female teachers is smaller in the group of teachers with positive power attitudes and larger in the group that is negatively disposed to power. Yet, gender does not make a big difference at the more specified level of the teachers' power thinking. Age, teacher position and especially the school level seemed to be more meaningful background variables than gender even among the relativist/uncertain teachers also in the 1999 survey.

The analysis points out that also in 1999 majorities of kindergarten and comprehensive school teachers criticized politicians and administrators as power partners, as they did in the earlier surveys. Further, at general level they seemed to appreciate children, parents and colleagues as power partners, and also expressed reservedness when sharing expertise and power with parents was dealt with at a more specific level (see Nuutinen 1999). The latest results point out that the most typical teacher orientation to power in general, philosophical meaning (the relativistic/uncertain power disposition) was in the most cases combined with a reserved disposition to the co-operation with parents. However, in the second largest group power relativism/uncertainty was related to positive attitude towards partnership with parents, and on the whole the proportion of the teachers with positive attitude towards parents was larger than in the survey 1997 too. It is possible that some positive partnership developments have taken place, but it is too early to make any far reaching

conclusions of these findings, since, for example, a few unpublished material point out that more often than earlier teachers criticize parents for not taking enough responsibility and being confused as educators. This can be a sign of polarization of dispositions due to increased public discussion on the children's and youth's problems in Finland.

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Involving parents in children's education: what teachers say in Malaysia

Sharifah Md. Nor & Jennifer Wee Beng Neo

Abstract
This study examines the teachers' perceptions towards the concepts, school practices and barriers of school and family partnerships in primary schools in Malaysia. A total of 553 respondents answered the questionnaires. The findings showed that the respondents' perceptions of the concepts of partnerships were partial. Only a few school practices were carried out and parents were identified as the primary barrier to school and family partnerships. The findings suggest that schools should adopt a comprehensive model where parent involvement should extend from home-based learning activities into school-based instructional activities. Schools should also solicit the collaboration and participation of families and communities in overcoming the barriers faced by them.

Introduction

Background of the Study

The present education system in Malaysia focuses largely on teachers as the key players in the children's education with little concentration being placed in having parents as co-partners in the children's learning process. Schools are aware that there is a gap between the school and family institutions that often created unnecessary problems for the children they share. School, as a social system, functions within the framework of the open system and it is shaped and changed through the interactions with the environments (Ballantine, 1997; Hoy and Miskel, 1982). Schools cannot exist independently of the purpose they serve for other structures in society (Katz, 1978). Schools need families and communities to co-partners with them to address the multidimensional needs of children other as none of them can work in a vacuum. Families' support and cooperation in improving the children's education has been emphasized by Hallinger et al. (1992) and Epstein and Becker (1982). Synthesis of reviews by Dreeben (1968) and Lightfoot (1978) note although differences between schools and families exist, there is a need to recognize important similarities: overlapping of goals, responsibilities, and mutual influence of the two major environments which simultaneously affect children's learning, growth and development. This means schools recognize the importance and potential influence and contributions of all family members in the children's education.

Obviously, the individualistic roles played by the schools and families which adhere to the concept of separate responsibilities of institutions is not practical anymore (Epstein, 1987a). A paradigm shift in the school system is essential where the concept of separate responsibilities of institutions must be transformed into overlapping responsibilities of institutions which emphasize the coordination, cooperation and

complementarity of schools and families, and encourage communication and collaboration between the two institutions. A shared responsibility is a powerful tool for improving schools and by bringing teachers, parents and families together, there will be less blaming and finger pointing at each other in the children's education.

Currently, parental involvement in the Malaysian schools is via the school PTA's platform. This level of partnership is not integral in enhancing school and family partnerships at all levels of the children's schoolings (Wee, 1995; Wee, 1996). Parental involvement need to expand further beyond the current practices if parents are to be co-partners in the children's education. One of the school's challenges is to collaborate and tackle the issues collectively with families. No baseline information on parent involvement practices in primary schools exists; yet such practices are an essential element of effective, accelerated and SMART schools. This study proposes to examine the teachers' perceptions on the concepts of partnership. Also, it attempts to identify the school practices in parental involvement and the barriers to school and family partnerships in primary schools**.**

School and family partnerships is largely an uncharted territory in the Malaysian education system. Little is known about parental involvement in schools except via the role of the schools' PTAs (Wee, 1995; Wee, 1996). It is hoped that the findings of this study may benefit all headmasters and teachers in primary and secondary schools with information, knowledge and skills on how to solicit and involve parents and families to play supportive roles in assisting the children in their learning process.

Research Questions

Specifically this study focuses to answer these research questions:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions of the concept of school and family partnerships?
2. What are the school practices in parent involvement?
3. What are the barriers to school and family partnerships?

Review of related literature

Concepts of Partnerships

The primary aim of partnership is for the school to reach out to families, prompt them to realize that they have a role, and they are responsible toward the children's learning process. Partnership in education is the connections where both the school and the family recognize, respect and support each other in the children's learning process (Epstein, 1992). It refers to the assistance it provides in escaping the dilemma of whom to blame for the children's failure in education. Epstein (1995) states the principal goals of partnerships is to develop and conduct better communication with families across the grades in order to assist students to succeed in school.

School Practices in Parent Involvement

School and family partnerships represent a shared approach to the education of children. Partners recognized their shared interests and responsibilities for children and they work together to create better programmes and opportunities for students (Epstein, 1995). A strong partnership between the school and the home is needed if quality education is to be provided to all children (Haley and Berry, 1988). By working together, school and family can reinforce each other's effort towards a common

goal; and without this cooperation, neither the teacher nor the parent can be fully effective. Schools need parents and families to join them in their crusade to improve the quality of education for all students. Earlier studies and reviews suggest that the key to partnership is via Epstein's six types of parent involvement practices (Epstein et al. 1997; Epstein, 1995; 1988; 1987). This model includes:

Type 1 - Parenting: Basic Responsibilities of Families
This refers to the basic responsibilities of families: to ensure children's health and safety; to provide parenting and child-rearing skills needed to prepare children for school; to respond to the continual need to supervise, discipline, and guide children at each age level; and to build positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior appropriate for each grade level.

Type 2 - Communication: Basic Responsibilities of Schools
Type 2 refers to the communications from school to home about school programmes and children's progress. In the light of the school's responsibilities in this parent involvement practices, school should design effective forms of communication so that families could be informed of the school's programmes and the children's improvement (Epstein, 1992).

Type 3 - Volunteer: Parent Involvement at School
This type refers to parent volunteers who assist teachers, headmasters, and children in classrooms or in other school-based activities. It also refers to parents who come to school to support students' performances and sports activities; to attend workshops or other educational and training programmes; and to improve themselves so that they are able to assist their children in their learning.

Type 4 - Home Involvement: Parent Involvement in Home Learning Activities.
It refers to parent-initiated activities or child-initiated requests for help, and instructions from teachers for parents to monitor and assist their own children at home on learning activities that are coordinated with the children's classwork.

Type 5 - School Governance: Leadership and Participation
Type 5 refers to parents taking decision-making roles in the PTA/PTO, advisory councils, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level (Epstein, 1992; Epstein and Dauber, 1991; Becker and Epstein, 1982). It also refers to parent and community activists in independent advocacy groups that monitor the schools and work for school improvement.

Type 6 - Collaboration: Collaborating with the Community
Type 6 practice refers to school having connections with agencies, businesses representatives, religious groups and other groups that share responsibility for the children's education and future successes. Likewise, it refers to connections that schools, students and families contribute to the community (Epstein, 1988; 1992: Dietz, 1992).

Barriers to School and Family Partnerships
Study by Leitch and Tangri's (1988) on the barriers to school and home collaboration found that teachers and parents acknowledged changes in attitudes and behaviors; their need for independence on one hand, and for structure on the other was not fulfilling their responsibilities. Teachers perceived too much permissiveness at home, and parents spoke of lack of discipline and limited expectations at schools. Teachers perceived the cumbersome school systems and culture, teachers' lack of knowledge, skills and attitudes as the major barriers to school and

family partnerships (Leitch and Tangri, 1988). Educators' lack of knowledge, skills and training on how to solicit parents to be involved have also been identified as barriers to partnership.

Some parents believe that the school and family constitute separate roles in the education of the children, and their role is caring and nurturing their children outside the school. Parents' heavy work schedules, lack of time, negative attitudes and experiences were identified as the barriers that affect their involvement in schools (Leitch and Tangri, 1988).

Methodology

Survey methodology was employed to gather data and information. Samples consist of 553 respondents from 20 primary schools in Petaling district. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select the samples. The instrument used was formulated after a synthesis of existing instruments by Joyce L. Epstein and Karen Clark Salinas (1993); Michael Dietz (1992); Wee's (1995) and Epstein et al. (1997). The questionnaires were validated by a panel of experts and pilot tested using 30 teachers, randomly selected, from a non-sampled school Data were processed using SPSS for Windows Release 6.0 and descriptive analysis using frequencies and percentages were used.

Findings

Concepts of Partnerships

Teachers' perceptions on the concepts of school and family partnerships were partial (refer Table 1). Majority teachers indicated a higher need for parental involvement in *Type 1: parenting practice* (96.4%); *Type 4: home involvement practice* (91.3%); *Type 6: collaboration practice* (88.2%) and *Type 2: communication practice* (74.5%). Only a minimal need for parents to be involved in practices pertaining to school governance (4.3%) and as volunteers in classroom instructional activities (14.8%).

Table 1 - Concepts of Partnerships

practices	% Respondents indicating the Need for Parental Involvement (n=553)	
	f	%
Type 1: Parenting	533	96. 4
Type 2: Communication	412	74..5
Type 3: Volunteer	82	14. 8
Type 4: Home Involvement	505	91. 3
Type 5: School Governance	24	4. 3
Type 6: Collaboration	488	88.2

School practices in parent involvement

The findings in Table 2 showed that the teachers reported that only a few types of school practices were carried out by their schools

(a) Type 4 home involvement practice, that is parent involvement in the children's home learning activities predominates high (84.3%). Teachers reported that the schools asked parents to be more involved in the children's home-based learning activities, such as *assisting their children in their homework and reading activities.*

(b) A variety of communication tools, such as telephones, letters notes, memos and newsletters were used by the schools to communicate with parents / families. The schools' contact with parents / families were mostly pertaining to *children's academic difficulty and classroom disruptions,* rather than *informing parents of their children's success or soliciting parents to be involved in the children's learning activities*

However, some school practices were not popular in the schools studied. The practices include:

(c) Teachers reported that parental involvement in Type 5 school governance practice was in non-governance activities, such as *attending PTAs' meetings* and in *planning parental involvement programmes in the schools* but *not in activities related to the school management and decision making process.*

(d) Teachers reported that their schools collaborated with the community especially in *assisting the community to organize after-school programmes for students*. The schools also received financial support from various businesses' agencies.

(e) Parental involvement in Type 3 volunteer practice was not a popular practice in most schools (29.8%). Parent volunteers were mainly *in fund-raising activities but not in classroom instructional activities*. Headmasters, teachers and the school's PTA were used to solicit parent volunteers.

(f) Type 1 parenting practice was the least popular practice carried out by the schools (26.2%). The schools *neither provide parents /families with techniques in assisting the children with their homework nor courses or seminars on parenting.*

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Table 2 - School Practices in Parental Involvement

practices	% Respondents indicating the Need for Parental Involvement (n=553)	
	f	%
Type 1: Parenting	145	26. 2
Type 2: Communication	421	76. 1
Type 3: Volunteer	165	29. 8
Type 4: Home Involvement	466	84. 3
Type 5: School Governance	319	57. 7
Type 6: Collaboration	287	51. 9

Barriers to school and family partnerships

Parents were perceived to be the primary barrier to school and family partnerships. Parents*' job commitments and lack of time* (95.7%); *parents' negative attitudes and lack of skills* (64.2%) were identified as the barriers that emanated from the family (Table 3).

A few barriers also emanated from the school environments such as *lack of school funds to finance partnership' activities* (62.4%); *insufficient parent involvement activities* (28.4%); *no close rapport between teachers and parents* (37.3%); and *no time to organize parent involvement activities* (23.9%).

Table 3 - Barriers to School and Family Partnerships (n=553)

barriers	f	%
Teachers' negative attitudes	36	6.5
Teachers have no knowledge on how to involve parents	59	10.7
Lack of initiatives from teachers	57	10.3
No close rapport between teachers and parents	206	37.3
School has no time to organize parent involvement activities	132	23.9
Lack of school funds to finance partnership activities	345	62.4
School does not provide activities that encourage partnership	157	28.4
Parents' negative attitudes and lack of skills to help the school	355	64.2
Parents have no time and are too busy with work	529	95.7
Parents fear of not being able to communicate with teachers	121	21.9
Low social economic status of family	171	30.9
Parents' low level of education	120	21.7
Distance from house to school	88	15. 9

Implications and recommendations

1. Findings on the concepts of partnerships show a partial partnership existed between schools and families. Therefore schools need to initiate and lead parents / families to be involved by developing fundamentally different kinds of capacities to involve them in the children's learning activities.
2. Only a few school practices was carried out. The lack of school-based parental involvement practices suggests that schools need to expand the involvement of parents from home-based and school-based support activities into class-based and school-governance practices by reinforcing that parents / families have to play a greater role in the children's learning process. Schools can provide opportunities to strengthen parenting skills, enhance parent networks, and minimize the stresses of parenting.
3. Barriers to partnerships can also be overcome with the participation of everyone involved in the children's education. Schools ought to solicit the collaboration of the state and district education offices, community and corporate agencies too. Their support are also needed to assist schools and families to overcome the conflicting schedules of working parents and teachers via strategic planning plans. A corporate culture where

education is everybody's business ought to be instilled in the school environment.

4. Currently, teacher education programmes in Malaysia did not incorporate family involvement training in their curriculum. The absence of in-service and pre-service training programmes indirectly required teacher education programmes to design an innovative curricular so that substantial family involvement training can be incorporated to inculcate positive attitudes toward family involvement.

5. Presently, there is rarely a coherent policy framework to support schools in their efforts to reach out to families and communities although such policies are badly needed. It is time that the education system needs some transformative changes. The Ministry of Education needs to put parent involvement on the national education agenda by including it in a list of National Education Goals. Federal government support at Ministry level to enter into a new partnership is essential if we want to achieve the goals of SMART schools and the National Education Philosophy.

Conclusion

The education system in the new millennium should encourage all schools to promote and adopt partnerships among educators, parents and families, communities, businesses and corporate organizations in their improvement efforts. Schools need assistance, support, recognition and on-going guidance in order to develop and maintain successful programmes of partnership. Any efforts to include parents and families in the children's education require a shift in the educators' and parents' mindsets and attitudes pertaining to the importance of children's learning. Families need to be more involved in improving the children's learning not only in the homes, but also in the school's environment so that an integral partnership between the school and the family institutions could be established. School and family partnerships will only be successful when students, families, teachers and communities collaborate and interact with one another in the children's learning process.

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Section 3

Specific aspects of school-family-community relations

Teacher training on parents in education

Birte Ravn

The success of collaboration between families, schools and communities depend on the teachers and the schools. It is still on their premises that this relationship unfolds. Nonetheless - or because of this - many studies find among a great number of teachers uncertainty and even fear of parents. Many of these also find parents willing to co-operate but not feeling welcome to do it. There is a great variety in this pattern which reflects the local and national education policies and discourses, and the ways schools and education are organized as well as what social and ethnic groups teachers are meeting.
Little attention has so far been paid to how teachers acquire the facility to work constructively with parents in their particular social, cultural and economic context; what is the content and how is it organized.

This paper is an approach to line up some aspects of this scenario in order to work out a research project in the Nordic countries to study teacher training and education preparing for this relationship and to make suggestions for adjustment to life and learning in late modern society. Any comments, references and suggestions are therefore welcome.

Rationale
Across the various approaches to study or practice involvement of parents in education a unanimous request is being expressed to improve teachers' preparation for developing dialogue and partnerships with parents. All results from empirical studies as well as from attempts to establish and practice partnerships put the question 'How can teacher pre-service and in-service training programmes nurture home-school community partnership?' [1] The OECD study *Parents as Partners in Schooling* (1997:53) stated:
'*Principals, teachers and parents need more experience in working together - and training in how to do it, especially since some teachers find it hard to relate professionally to adults rather than children*'.
Schools and teachers are getting new educational roles in the context of changing family structures, social integration and relationships between educational and social policies at various levels. Changes in social conditions and structures from industrial to 'post-industrial' or 'information' society are characterized by reflexive modernity. This implies that roles, structures and tasks seem less definable than they were conceived of in industrial society, educational contents less predictable, and social conflicts less controllable. Teachers in late modern society are continuously being faced with requirements to explain their practice. As there is no longer any agreeable tradition or answers to rely on, teachers feel a still more heavy burden, difficult to bear alone. As a consequence, they feel unsure and vulnerable and develop an attitude of closeness and arms-length distance to the parents (fx Cederstrøm 1991, the ERNAPE conference in Copenhagen 1996, Hargreaves 1999, Sean Neill 2001).

Teacher professionalism
Teacher professionalism and schools to day seem to a large extent still to be conceptualized adjusted schooling in industrial societies. Traditional thinking and behaving put the brake on changing behavior and attitudes (fx Sehested and Soerensen

(1996), Wadskjær (1996)). Many implications for teacher-parent community relationships are embedded in the whole notion of teaching-as-a-profession signifying an implicit distance between the expert and the client, and in the framework of education theories conceiving knowledge as a transfer of a body of information more or less independent of the interaction, the context, and the influence of the affective dimension on the cognitive and skills dimensions of learning.

Pauline Newport made in the nineties a qualitative study in three Australian schools (a state school, a Catholic system school, an independent school not part of any system) into the way in which teachers construct their thinking about professionalism and how this affects their teaching practice in relation to parent participation. The data gathered suggested that a strong set of beliefs, associated with teacher professionalism, act as a basis for important distinctions between 'teachers' and 'non teachers'. Although the results in general revealed that the teachers in the study were in favor of parents being in the school, this acceptance was more in the terms of helpers under guidance and control of the teachers. If parents are not believed to have the necessary background to participate in activities related to curriculum or in decision taking, it may not only hinder but also be destructive to both teachers in their teaching practice and to parents and children and to society in general. As Pauline Newport says, the idea of working with parents implies the need to *share* 'power' and this is more daunting than that of collegial work with peers. Teacher professionalism needs to include the ability to learn from parents and to be responsive to their expectations. There is a need for a political agenda for the development of teacher professionalism within a new organization and professional mode.

Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan (Canada) have for quite some years been working on proposals for professionalisation of teachers as an urgent part of educational reforms. They see teachers as skilled agents of improvement, teachers as agents of educational change and societal improvement. They point to a need for interactive professionalism. To Hargreaves the changing relationships with parents are one of the greatest challenges to teacher professionalism in the postmodern age. [2]

Emotional geographies of teacher-parents relationships

Hargreaves has later been working on a study of emotions of teaching and educational change in the province of Ontario in Canada. One of his issues has been what he calls 'The emotional geographies of teacher-parents relationships'. In this study he explores the deep sources of the anxieties that the partnership with parents represent to the teachers by analyzing a number of teachers' perceptions of their emotional relationships with parents.

'Teachers experience *positive* emotion when they receive gratitude and appreciation from parents or find agreement and support from them. In line with the literature on the emotions of happiness (Oatley, 1991), they are patterns which validate or help teachers fulfill their purposes. There appears to be a moral closeness or agreement in the emotional geography of positively perceived teacher-parent relations. But a second possible source of positive emotion to which Oatley also refers - engaging in rich relationships with others - was largely missing in the accounts the teachers provided. Close relationships involve more give-and-take around purposes, more reciprocal learning among the people involved. The data suggest that teachers may find this difficult. Yet, by not seeking out and actively cultivating closer relations with parents, teachers deny themselves the very positive feedback from other adults that they most crave'…

Hargreaves finds that the deeper reasons for many teachers' damaging reluctance to build such relations with parents become clear when we look at the data on teachers' negative emotional relationships with parents:

the patterns of *negative* emotion in our data are firstly, ones in which teachers' academic purposes and expertise are challenged or questioned by parents - threatening the autonomy of their professional judgment on teaching and learning issues, and their ability to achieve their purposes by expressing that judgment without interference. This seems to be the chief reason why teachers paradoxically avoid soliciting the feedback from parents that might supply the praise they otherwise crave. More interaction and feedback might mean more challenges to their expertise and professionalism - a risk that many teachers are unprepared to take. Second, on behavioral matters, teachers want more than silent, distanced respect from parents. They need to solicit parents' active support to get their children to comply with school attendance policies and meet approved behavioral standards. Negative emotion occurred when such support was missing - when parents were seen as failing to meet their responsibilities. A third source of negative emotion intensified the problems highlighted by the other two. Oatley (1991) argues that in addition to unfulfilled purposes, negative emotion arises when people have weak or poor relationships. The socio-cultural distance between some teachers and parents in our study made relationship-building difficult, interfered with teachers' and parents' ability to empathize with each other's purposes and work more closely together, and undermined the emotional understanding on which successful partnerships depend. One further factor exacerbates these differences and difficulties even further - the professional and physical distance that often exists between teachers and parents'…

We have little research into teachers' emotional life in teaching. Waller (1932) was the first one, Lortie (1970 and 1975) has later touched this. But, we have valuable insight into what cognitively leads teachers' activities. It has been more 'how' than 'why'. The context of teaching and the teachers as persons are, however, two key issues.

Affective education in a cultural context

The context of teaching - in particular with reference to the emotional life in school 'the affective dimension' of teaching/learning - varies considerably across countries and cultures. This unavoidably influences the way parents are perceived - and perceive themselves - in relation to school and teachers. The next will illustrate this. It draws on a comparative study of pupils' perception of school and learning in three European countries, England, France and Denmark (the *ENCOMPASS* study)[3] which I have conducted together with a team of researches from Bristol University. Through a description of teachers' roles in these three parts of Europe and of the way the affective dimension of teaching is being organized in the three school systems the impact of the context is obvious and has to be part of the data when making a study of teacher training for interaction, dialogue and partnership like the one we are preparing for.

Different teachers' roles

In *Denmark* most teachers in the folkeskole[4] have a combined academic and pastoral responsibility for a single group of pupils (a class) for the entire period of their schooling (i.e. from grade 1 to grade 9/10). Class teachers co-ordinate teams of three or four teachers who, between them, cover the spread of the curriculum. They also have the major responsibility for links between home and school which being constant for this span of years, build up a relatively close relationship with the parents. Typically, teachers also spend some of their time teaching additional subjects to pupils in classes throughout the age range, as part of other class teams. This helps to integrate the various groups within the school. In this study, the classes normally consisted of approximately 18 -20 pupils of mixed ability and a great emphasis was put on the cohesion of the group and its ability to work together, academically as well as socially. Use of the 'class hour' [5] as either a separate time-tabled period or integrated into other lessons, enabled the class teacher to build up close relationships with their pupils and to

investigate issues of concern, but many class teachers felt compelled to use some of this time for catching up on teaching matters under pressure from international comparative studies which had concluded that Danish pupils were behind pupils in other countries, at some stages. Policy initiatives meant that teachers were under pressure to develop cross-curricular project work and provide for a differentiated curriculum within the class group. This created quite a lot of difficulty for some of the teachers. Teachers, generally, felt free to interpret the national curriculum framework in a way that supported the needs of their pupils by introducing themes that had a direct relevance to their lives outside school.

The *English* teachers in our sample were subject specialists, teaching classes of pupils throughout the age range. They worked with other teachers within the school who taught the same subject and with whom they had regular 'departmental' or 'faculty' meetings. To a certain extent this allegiance to a subject gave them a particular identity which differed depending on the subject which they taught. They were supervised by a departmental/ faculty head who was usually part of the school's Senior Management Team.
In addition to their subject teaching responsibility, many of the teachers had a pastoral responsibility, the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), as group tutor for a particular class of pupils. In theory, this role was to look after pupils' social and emotional well-being and to be the initial contact with parents and home. However, evidence from the project suggested that this role was being reconceptualized as a learning support role in an effort to raise standards, and constrained by a highly prescriptive curriculum. In practice, the short periods of tutor time at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions were usually taken up with registration and administration, which left little time to explore issues or build up relationships. Some teachers accepted this situation; others considered it a missed opportunity. Tutor groups were of mixed ability but the pupils usually spent most of their time, grouped by attainment, in subject lessons. Teachers found themselves under increasing pressure to raise standards and meet government targets. This, together with an intense inspection system, left many of the sample feeling overworked and stressed.
French teachers in the sample demonstrated a more restricted perception of their role in line with their civil service status. Typically, they maintained a certain professional distance from the parents of their pupils. Their focus was their subject teaching and their aims concentrated around encouraging pupils to be inspired by their subject and by ensuring that they got as many pupils as possible to the correct level for the following year. Teachers were generally clear about where their professional role ended and where the school's non-teaching staff should take over with regard to the social and emotional needs of their pupils. There was no special time set aside for the role as professeur principal (kind of class teacher). It was normally carried out during one of the subject teacher's lessons. The role was officially seen as one of being an intermediary between home and school, but by the teachers, it was mostly perceived as an administrative role. Its function was perceived as that of introducing and reminding pupils of the school rules, liaising with other teachers and guiding pupils in their school trajectory. However, this traditional role was changing, firstly, due to policy initiatives and secondly due to the type of school population with which collège teachers in difficult areas had to deal. Some teachers were beginning to have a more extended concept of their role, which included an affective dimension. They were generally in favor of the national curriculum, which they did not consider to be over-prescriptive and which they considered provided all pupils with the same knowledge and experience. They were generally not in favor of selection.
Time, space and educational ideas and priorities, thus, provided different opportunities for teachers

to meet the parents in what could develop into a partnership and real dialogue. This was further confirmed by the fact that a key difference between the three educational systems turned out to be the way which the affective dimension : personal, social and democratic education was taken care of in the three systems.

The affective dimension

In *Denmark*, this dimension is to a great extent integrated in school life and the curriculum. It is partly taken care of by the class teacher, partly by subject teachers during lessons and in meeting the children outside classrooms. The headmaster and the school board (made up of a majority of parents with children at the school) are responsible for both the academic and the affective education. All parents are continuously invited as partners in their children's affective as well as academic education. In *England* the affective dimension is part of a particular curriculum or programme and also partly taken care of by the tutors. Lower secondary schools incorporate two systems: the affective or pastoral system and the academic or subject teaching system. The two systems are seen as separate but complementary. Both are taken care of by teachers. Parents only have a limited role in this respect. In *France*, the affective dimension had until recently little and no formal place in the curriculum. There are two very distinct systems. These are subject teaching, the academic aspects, and the vie scolaire, the affective aspects. They are taken care of by two different categories of staff. Also in France the parents have a limited role to play. They are invited if there are problems.

Teacher training was not part of the above study. It is provided for in very different ways in Europe and many teachers, even, do not have the opportunity to qualify for meeting the new challenges which now inevitably entail coping with social and cultural problems and problems of marginalization.

The Nordic countries

The Nordic countries are compared to other parts of Europe quite similar with regard to educational policies and parent involvement. In the Nordic countries parent teacher co-operation has for many years been part of the school agenda and curriculum in primary and secondary schools. Teacher training courses, e.g. in education, psychology, and practising, have to some and varied extent provided an opportunity to learn about this relationship. Changing curriculum in teacher education have, however, lately resulted in a reduction of the number of courses in education and psychology for teacher students and to let more room for subject specific subjects, while, on the other hand we can observe a growing public and national recognition of the value of interaction and dialogue between teachers and parents.

In spite of the comparatively common ground of education and social policies, there are culture specific differences. A simple sentence from a Swedish researcher who has compared the welfare systems in the Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Sweden and Norway where the differences are most evident: in the compulsory school, explains a significant difference:
School can in Denmark be regarded as a state supported prolongation of the home and the local society while the school in Sweden can be regarded as a prolongation of the state.
Norway is in between.
This means that although we from outside look similar to one another, the cultural context differs in a way that a comparative study of the context of teacher training might be profitable. Not to transfer models but to observe and to learn.

The Nordic study in to being

The above mentioned common aspects are to be taken into consideration.
Focus will be to encircle being professional (or competent) teacher in communication and interaction with parents in late modern society as

this has taken form in the Nordic democratically founded countries.

The study will be divided into a preparatory study in which documentary information will be collated, like:

- Teacher training programmes, management
- Co-operation programmes, responsibility, management - in class, school board, head of school, teacher-time
- The juridical framework/system
- School forms/types.

In the main study information will at first be gathered, analyzed from parents', teachers' children's pictures of one another and compared to the documentary information and the national and local political, educational and cultural context.

Notes

1 Joyce Epstein at the Johns Hopkins University have been conducted a study of this teacher training in the USA.

2 It is interesting to learn that he as participant in the first ERNAPE conference in Copenhagen in 1996 found that it '*was very influential for his own ideas on school and community'* (he referred here to his and Michael Fullan's book 'What's worth fighting out there?' 1998).

3 The Encompass project team: *Marilyn Osborn, Patricia Broadfoot, Elizabeth McNess, Claire Planel, Pat Triggs,* University of Bristol, *Birte Ravn*, The Danish University of Education - and Olivier Cousin, University of Bordeaux II, *Thyge Winther-Jensen*, University of Copenhagen. A research report is available at the University of Bristol, Graduate School of Education. A book is in print at Open University Press: *Comparing Learners Across Europe: Culture, Context and Policy.*

4 Primary and lower secondary school (years 6 to 16).

5 This is similar to the idea of 'tutor time' in England, and 'l'heure de vie' in France.

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Preparing teachers to work with parents[1]

Diana B. Hiatt-Michael

Outstanding teachers, such as those selected for the Milken Teaching Award or those who achieve National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS] certification, regularly communicate with the families of their students. These teachers appreciate the value of home-school communication because experience has shown that understanding and the family was the essential to effectively work with the student.

A review of research during the past two decades has supported that understanding (Epstein, 2001; Hiatt-Michael, 2001). Teachers' efforts to involve families promote the following: (a) better student attendance; (b) higher graduation rate from high school; (c) fewer retentions in the same grade; (d) increased levels of parent and student satisfaction with school; (e) more accurate diagnosis of students for educational placement in classes; (f) reduced number of negative behavior reports; and, (g) most notably, higher achievement scores on reading and math tests.

Based upon these findings, National Education Goals and Improving America's Schools Act [IASA] in 1994 brought the importance of parent involvement to the forefront in schools and school districts. The eighth goal in National Education Goals supports 'school partnerships that will increase parent involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children' (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). IASA requires that districts that receive more than $500,000 per year must allocate 1% of those funds for parent involvement activity.

However, the primary press for parent involvement in teacher education programs is coming from teachers entering the contemporary classroom, many filled with students from cultures other than that of the new teacher. These new teachers report on standard follow-up evaluations from their university that one of the missing elements in their teacher education programs is working with families.

Standards or courses on family involvement issues

Until the past few years, most state teacher certification departments did not require that teacher education programs include standards or courses on family involvement issues. The Harvard Family Study Report (Shartrand, et al., 1997) concluded that only 22 states had parent involvement in their credentialing standards. California is the first and only state that has enacted legislation mandating prospective teachers and certified educators 'to serve as active partners with parents and guardians in the education of children' (California Education Code 44291.2, 1993). California enacted this legislation because parent involvement research indicates higher student achievement and satisfaction with schools *and* because professional educators and parents/guardians may be from diverse cultures. At present, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards includes parent involvement as one out of the eleven generalist standards for all three developmental levels--Early Childhood, Middle Childhood and Early Adolescence.

Gray (2001) reported a significant increase during the late 1990s in the number of states that had some administrative or credential statement requiring that teachers should possess some knowledge and skills related to parent and community involvement. These state-

credentialing bodies added a parent and community involvement component into teacher education standards or adopted National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE] standards that include such standards for working with parents and the community.

The extent of parent involvement issues

To determine the extent of parent involvement issues in K-12 teacher education programs in the nation, a recent representative survey of 147 universities with teacher education programs tapped department chairs or deans of private and public institutions in each of the fifty states (Hiatt-Michael, 2001). The survey raised questions on number of courses, types of courses, topics, and class instructional methods. Of the 96 who responded to the survey, 7 indicated that parent involvement issues were not included in any course. Twenty-two replied that the school offered a course devoted to parent involvement, but this course was not required for K-12 teacher education students. Such courses were developed for special education or early childhood teachers or offered as an elective course.

Ninety-three percent of the respondents reported that parent involvement issues were woven into existing teacher education courses, such as special education, reading methods, instructional methods, and early childhood education in that rank order. In states with major portions of the population coming from diverse cultures, parent involvement is included in cultural diversity and teaching English-as-a-second-language courses. Universities in Hawaii and California, locales with a high proportion of diverse ethnic groups, reported the greatest number of courses that included parent involvement issues.

Respondents replied that the most popular topic is parent conferences. This finding is important because parent conferences are the most pervasive home-school communication in schools after the ubiquitous report card. Other topics, in rank order, included parent concerns, parent newsletters, and working within the community.

Forty-nine percent of respondents reported that students utilized case studies in one or more courses. Other instructional methods were research studies (40%), role-playing (40%), conflict resolution (32%), project creation (24%), and home surveys (15%).

These research findings are similar to other studies reported by Epstein (2001). Epstein also indicated that early childhood and special education receive a disproportionate amount of parent involvement attention within university preparation and in school practice. In addition, the research suggested there is a limited percentage of programs that include other forms of home-school partnership such as utilizing interactive homework with parents, conducting parent workshops, designing and producing class or school newsletters, and planning a concerted, year-long program of partnerships. The research finds, however that although classroom teachers assert that working with families is important to the child's positive school outcomes, they receive little formal training and, thus, possess minimal knowledge and skills to work with parents.

Teacher education courses that deal with parent involvement issues and practices do make a difference in subsequent classroom practice. An assessment study by Katz and Bauch (1999) on graduates from teacher education programs at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University indicated that these new teachers felt prepared and engaged in a diverse number of parent involvement practices because they had received parent involvement training in their courses.

Infusion of parent involvement practices within all teacher preparation courses appears to be the reported ideal, but not all professors are equally committed to parent involvement. Knowledge of subject matter areas, standards, and testing assume such priority by faculty, who note the emphasis by state and district administrators on those topics, that the potent component of the educational process–parent involvement--receives significantly less emphasis.

Work by Kirschenbaum and Hiatt-Michael summarize numerous promising practices for teachers related to infusing parent involvement into their university instruction (Hiatt-Michael, in press). Acquiring skills to promote positive home-school communication is one of the most critical. These authors recommend that university faculty as well as teacher supervisors, master teachers, and administrators utilize case studies and role-playing to familiarize teachers with the intricacies of a positive parent conference. Prospective and new teachers should visit master teachers in classrooms to observe and critique parent conferences. These authors suggest course and classroom activities: preparing a case study on a family, making a home visit, providing home-school literacy programs, preparing a classroom newsletter, attending and participating in a school advisory council, and many others.

According to those outstanding teachers honored by the Milken Foundation or meeting the generalist standards for the NBPTS, other activities should include how to effectively gather important information from parents, how to handle difficult situations, and how to connect with parents on the telephone and in person.

If teachers do not receive training in teacher education programs prior to entering the classroom, opportunities to acquire such training within the school setting are limited. California created the Beginning Teacher Support Activities [BTSA] to support new teachers, especially those who were entering the field with an emergency credential. School districts that experience a teacher shortage may hire new teachers on an emergency credential that requires new teachers to possess only a bachelor's degree in any area and to pass the California Test of Basic Skills. The majority of these new teachers are not from the same ethnic population as the students and the community. Districts must apply to the state for BTSA funding. Ten to twenty percent of the BTSA program for new teachers includes teacher professional education to develop skills to work with families and the surrounding community. The amount and types of activities vary with the teacher, school and district needs.

Three national hubs are the most promising sources for information, training and support to new teachers. These hubs are connecting schools, districts and states into networks of sharing, development, and assessment. These hubs are the clearinghouses for practices, research studies, and policy statements. Schools that connect with these hubs showcase promising practices for parent involvement. The Institute for Responsive Education at Boston University has researched and promoted parent involvement issues for nearly four decades. This group has connected educators in the area of family, school community partnerships across the nation and every continent. The National Network of Partnership Schools based at John Hopkins University coordinates a network of schools, districts and state agencies that adhere to the Epstein model of six types of parent involvement (Epstein, 2001). This group promotes staff development, the creation of site action plans, and assessment at each site. Administrators, teachers, and parents at each participating site collaborate on these activities. At the federal level, Partnership for Family Involvement in Education within the U.S.

Department of Education coordinates a diverse range of activities. The agency organizes staff development sessions, collects information on promising practices, and disseminates informative brochures.

Conclusion

Though the benefits of working with families are documented, teacher education programs and local school districts offer limited educational opportunities to new teachers. California enacted a law that appears to have more university support for parent involvement within teacher education courses than states with only administrative requirements or adoption of NCATE Standards. In addition, through the funding of BTSA California supports the training

of new teachers at the local site level. In other localities, federal funding promotes working with families but may not require teacher professional development. Legislation is needed that supports teacher education to meet necessary requirements to work effectively with families across all 50 states. Legislation appears to be the next step to foster teacher professional development in the area of working with parents.

Note

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‘The school I’d like my child to attend, the world I’d like my child to live in…’ parental perspectives on ‘special education’ in Cyprus

Helen Phtiaka

Introduction

When we examine the relationship between home and school in the case of families with children with special needs from a parental perspective, we are still concerned with the same questions we always are when we examine home school relationships. Such[1] questions are:

1. What do parents want from school?
2. What do they get?
3. How can we improve communication between the two so that they get what they and their children[2] want and need?

In this case however, new dimensions of the problem, for the most part invisible in the case of home-school relations which do not involve special needs, appear. First, communication between home and school here is not simply advisable or even important. It is a *sine qua non*. No child with special needs has the slightest possibility of surviving in the mainstream system under current conditions if an excellent communication is not established between home and school. Moreover, due to the long separatist tradition in the education of children with special needs throughout Europe, it is necessary here to argue for the need to include children with special needs in the mainstream classroom which in turn creates an increased need for communication between home and school. This is necessary in order to achieve the desired level of communication between home and school, but also in order to alleviate possible grievances of other parents for the existence of such children in the class. That is to say, the inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream classroom is possibly the only case where a need for the facilitation of communication between different groups of parents may be necessary. New questions therefore arise here such as:

1. Why is it important to include children with special needs in mainstream schools?
2. Why is it even more important now than it has ever been in the past?

The text which follows attempts to address these questions.

Going to school. A happy experience?

Your first day in school. Do you remember it? Your child’s first day in school. Do you fear it? Your child’s with special needs first day in school. Do you dread it?

Children are the most important investment we make in this world. The most precious and the most important by far. And thankfully we (still) cannot get the children we want. When I was pregnant for the first time I was dreaming of a beautiful baby girl with red hair and green eyes which would have the rosy complexion needed to be named Arothaphnousa, an old Cypriot name which brings to mind the long series of rhododendrons that beautify the long, hot and dry Cyprus summers. Instead I was lucky enough to get a beautiful baby boy with brown-blond hair

and a wheat complexion that grows darker in the sun. He was called Demetris -my father's name.

Do I love Demetris as much as I would have loved Arothaphnousa? Of course I do! Would I have loved Arothaphnousa as much as I love Demetris? Who knows? The children we bear (or those we chose to adopt) are our most real creations, little images of ourselves, and the truest heritage we leave behind on departure for greener pastures. We accept them for what they are, we love them, we want the best for them.

Do we always? Well, sometimes this is more difficult than others. My friend Betty used to say jokingly for her daughter Catherine, my Goddaughter: '*Damaged goods! You should be allowed to return them!*'. Catherine was born lovely and healthy and in three months of life developed an unknown, undiagnosed, unclassified syndrome that rendered her severely mentally retarded, deprived her of movement, speech and any other apparent form of communication with the world around her. Do her parents love her? Of course they do! Do they want the best for her? They are doing everything in their power to secure an education that will guarantee a better future for her. Do they accept her? After the first -understandable- shocked reaction to the unexpected, the answer here is also emphatically yes. Note here the words of another 'special'[3] mother, the mother of Maria[4]:

Maria was a shock for us at birth. Suddenly the moment I gave birth my husband and I saw a very lively baby but also a baby who looked like a little monster. Her head was badly distorted, her fingers and toes stuck together, six a piece.
mother of Maria, a girl with multiple handicaps

Children who are different from those we are expecting still command a great deal of our love, and our pain. We still want the best for them; the best school, the best world. In order to get the first, we need the second. In order to get the second, we have to create the first.

Let us listen to *parents* themselves *talking* about their expectations. Here is Michalis' mother[5]:

'It is natural for parents to expect the school environment to be hospitable, well equipped and of course well staffed. To have a programme that adapts to the needs of the child and does not force the child to adapt to needs and conditions that are beyond his/her needs and interests. How everything is different, most of the time, for parents of children with special needs!'
mother of Michalis, an autistic boy

The natural anticipation for the beginning of a child's school career often becomes an immense source of stress for the parents of a child with special needs. Zenon's mother indicates this:

From the year before (the beginning of Zenon's primary school attendance) I visited the head of the school and I informed him that next year he would have a child with special gifts studying in his school. I explained that Zenon retained very good communication with his environment, possessed a well developed vocabulary, and had not faced any difficulties in his integration in the nursery school. We began to worry as the year was approaching. I personally felt as if I were walking on a tight rope.
mother of Zenon, a deaf boy

The first experience of school is also often extremely disappointing as the same mother indicates:

Unfortunately the class teacher had some difficult previous experience from the past, from the integration of a child with special needs (not deaf), and she was very skeptical, right down to hostile some times. Maybe I had contributed to this myself due to the enormous stress I was under.
mother of Zenon, a deaf boy

Quite obviously, in the case of a child with special needs and his/her family the odds for a positive, happy start in school are severely

reduced. Yet we know that the first impressions from school are often the longer lasting ones and they prepare the ground accordingly for the interactions to follow. As I have indicated in previous work (Phtiaka 2001) a bad start in school might create a bad climate between home and school that is very difficult to overcome later. Clearly such a start has to be avoided at all costs.

Why so many difficulties?

Why is there an increased chance for a family of a child with special needs to start off badly in school? It seems to me that there are four main factors which contribute to this effect:

I. Increased Parental anxiety
II. Increased School anxiety
III. Increased practical difficulties
IV. Separatist culture

As the quotations used above and elsewhere (Phtiaka 2001) have indicated, parents are particularly anxious as the time approaches for them to send their child to school, especially the primary school where there may be little room for negotiations over the curriculum or the teaching and/or assessment methods for instance. This anxiety often distorts their first contact with school and gives the wrong message to teachers as it makes them appear aggressive or demanding or even angry when they are just insecure and afraid.

Increased anxiety may quite possibly exist also in school as soon as the message arrives that there is a child with special needs ready to be admitted, or as a result of a first meeting with anxious parents. Such anxiety exhibited on behalf of the school may also be misconstrued by receiving parents as a suspicion or even as a rejection.

The 'meeting' of two anxieties construed along these lines can be a disaster as the parents 'read' the school saying: 'we don't want such troubles in our hands', and the school 'reads' the parents saying: 'we shall be watching you and expose you at the first mistake'. If such a bad start is established, one can expect that every decision taken regarding the child from then on can easily be misinterpreted and lead to further misunderstandings.

Added to the natural anxiety of parents and school, if and how they are going to cope with each other, is more often than not the reality of an increased need for material or human support (special equipment, extra teaching support, specific staff expertise, extended working hours) which often goes unnoticed by the administration responsible. Schools or teachers may be required to put in that extra effort without the extra support needed. This may well lead to resentment, lack of cooperation or rejection.

The three factors mentioned above are all real, and present teachers, parents and pupils with special needs with problems over and above the regular communication difficulties usually identified between home and school. Suggestions as to how such problems can be handled in practice have been offered elsewhere (Thompson and Arora, 1996) I wish however to argue that the main reason for the increased difficulties often faced by families and schools in their communication over children with special needs, is the fourth factor stated above: the separatist culture. The anxiety families and schools feel in their 'first meeting' as well as the apparent (and the real) shortages in support regarding the education of a child with special needs, are all derivitives of the separatist culture. The separatist culture is the cause, and these are the effects; the separatist culture is the reason, and these are the pretexts; the separatist culture is the motive and these are the excuses. They exist only because the separatist culture exists and is predominant in European education and society for hundreds of years now.

Let us see how this cause and effect manifests itself.

Separatist culture

Able-bodyness has for a very long time in European history been the measure by which everything is judged (Hevey 1993). In Classical Greece, the cultural ancestor of Modern Europe, bodily beauty has long been coupled with health and able-bodyness as well as virtue and goodness. Physical or mental deviations from the norm have been interpreted as punishment from the Gods (Tiresias, Hercules) or even self inflicted punishment still originating from the Gods (Oedeipus). Disability is undesirable and hidden even among Gods. Hephaestus, God of Fire, one of the 12 Gods of mount Olympus and married to the Goddess of Beauty Aphrodite, is lame and considered ugly and bad tempered to an extent that almost justifies Aphrodite's love affair with Aris, the God of war, aggressive, able bodied and handsome. Eros, the little God of love in a fruit of this union and not the union of Aphrodite with her lawful lame husband. The husband spends most of his time hidden away in his workshop working, while illegitimate but able-bodied and beautiful Eros is shamelessly flying around playing games at the expense of Gods and mortals and so is the illegal couple.

As Education becomes obligatory in one European country after another, the laws which enforce it exempt children with physical and other problems from the obligation (Phtiaka 1997). For some of them, those who are considered capable of receiving education, special schools/institutions appear to offer education and training alternatives for a respectable life away from begging. Others are not so lucky. What we have come to call special education develops as a system completely independently and separately from what we have come to call mainstream education and always in a way that the former covers the latter's needs (Tomlinson 1982, Slee 1998). It is as late as the late twentieth century that most European countries begin to consider the special education system alongside the mainstream as two poles of one and the same system, the education system.

The integration movement, fruit of this parallel process, and therefore a direct descendant of the separatist tradition, ripens in Europe in the nineteen eighties, only to prove inadequate to solve the problem of education of children with special needs. It is this failure, heavily due to the separatist heritage integration carries with it, which calls for the appearance of a new, totally different movement, quite mistakenly often confused with the integration movement, that of inclusion. The inclusion movement however does not share the same history with the integration movement. It is instead a natural outcome of a disability discourse which is based on human rights (Phtiaka 2001a). For the inclusion movement, the whole discussion on the pros and cons of the integration of children with special needs in mainstream education settings is irrelevant. We no longer -in the 21st century- discuss the pros and cons of compulsory education. In contemporary Europe education is, for all its drawbacks, a well established basic human right for all children (Fragoudaki 1985). Nothing more and nothing less than that.

The discussion therefore is no longer *if* we shall educate children with special needs alongside children without special needs, but rather *how* shall we educate all children according to their needs in a very limited, very unsuitable, highly competitive educational system like that of most European countries today all this in an increasingly complex, market-led globalized context (Barton 1999).

Oliver (2000), based on Kuhn's analysis, argues that what has happened to us is a shift of paradigm. From the paradigm of special education we have moved on to that of inclusion. We have indeed. The paradigm of special education, even in its most sophisticated metamorphosis, integration, has proved inadequate to cope with contemporary complex needs and realities (Vlachou, 1997). It has therefore been replaced by a new one, that of inclusion. The paradigm of inclusion indicates

that all children have a right to be educated in the school of their neighborhood regardless of their particular needs. The specific arrangements necessary to cater for their need are just a matter of logistics that has to be taken care of..

My account so far has shown, I trust, 'why is it important to include children with special needs in mainstream schools'. We have, to stress it once more, that on the basis of a human rights model of education there is no other option in this space and time, but co-education of children with and without special needs or disabilities, as there is no other option but co-education of boys and girls, black and white, ethnic minority and majority students, etc. etc..

For children with any disability of mind or body, lack of the opportunity to be educated alongside their peers and acquire the benefits of this natural closeness, needs to be considered as an unacceptable form of discrimination. The voice of disabled adults who have themselves been subjected to various forms of 'special education' while in school (Barnes, 1992; Oliver, 2000) verifies this.

The future - bright and beautiful?

I would now like to indicate why -in my view- inclusion of all children in one classroom is now much more important than it has even been before in human history.

Boundaries placed by geography, time, distance, communication problems, language, national borders, religion, culture, etc. etc. used to be a very useful way to classify the world around us. They used to function very effectively as guardians of our differences and our mistakes. This can no longer be! The barriers that used to separate and protect us as distinct nations, cultures and philosophies, in Europe and elsewhere are being forcibly removed. We, as citizens appear to have almost no choice in the matter, unless we consider Genova an alternative. We are thrust, willingly on otherwise, in the same 'classroom' regardless of our expertise, our preferences, out skills, our talents, our abilities. We have to work together. We have to live together. For good or for bad. For better or for worse.

Under the circumstances, tolerance of each other's strengths and weaknesses, idiosyncracies and specialties is the only option we have if we are to continue to (co-) exist. Inclusion is *par excellence* the educational practice on a tolerant philosophy and is the only way ahead. The alternative is more twin towers which lead to more bombings, which bring about new twin towers, which lead to more bombings, and so on and so forth until the end of the world, which will not be very far if we continue at this jolly pace.

Conclusion

Communication between home and school, but also between home and home and school and school in essential in the case of children with special needs. Contrary to traditional views which consider special education a minority interest, its natural successor, inclusive education, is a global interest in every sense. Communication is therefore also necessary between discources in the relevant fields.

Notes

1 Clearly there are a number of questions raised here. I choose to concentrate on just three of them in order to make my material manageable.

2 There are often differences between what parents and children want or what the first think and the second really need. For the purposes of this exercise we shall assume that parents act as advocates for their children.

3 The term is -of course- used ironically to criticize the way mothers of children with special needs are perceived.

4 The extract, translated from greek, comes from a presentation Maria's mother gave at a special education seminar series at the University of Cyprus on September 16th 1996.

5 Psychology seminar, University of Cyprus, November 6th 1996.

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Minimalization of failure at school in Poland: Children and youth from socially deprived families

Elzbieta Bielecka

Introduction

The present-day school can play a leading role and can integrate overall influences exerted by various environments, lobbies, bodies, organizations and societies. Here there is much room for the community school or the family-supportive school. M. Winiarski[1] says that the distinction of the community school lies in absorbing two simultaneous impacts : one directly addressed to students and the other indirectly addressed to their family, out-school bodies, students' organizations - actions centered on students' welfare and their family's welfare.

Here I discuss the possibilities of collaboration between school, family and local community. I focus on the minimalization of children's failure at school and staging links with parents from socially deprived community. It must be stressed that the above issues relate to a regular public school. Unlike a private or a non-public school (a parent-run one), the public school does not enjoy a full range of facilities (organization, housing, finance, personnel) to introduce new ideas or activate members of the community. The structure of the financed by private sector school and the motivation of both parents and teachers are totally different.

As a university teacher and having experiences in realizing various educational programmes on behalf of children at risk and socially deprived families, I wish to share my remarks and tell about my doubts.

By combining theory with practice, I make an attempt to find out:

- what is a chance of minimalization of children's failure at school (children making troubles at school)?
- is it possible at all and if so, how to work with educationally ineffective parents who come from socially deprived families?

Children's Failure at School

The above problem is widely known. Also the cause of it and preventive measures are broadly discussed. Failure at school is defined as 'an emergence of differences between educational purposes and student's progress resulting in negative youth's attitude towards school'[2]. Researchers indicate to different stages of failure, both hidden and open ones. They say that the failure and difficulties at school are linked with developing child's personality and such factors as social, moral, psychological and economic. On the other hand it is just school which is supposed to create a chance of student's developing correct personal features and achieving success.

From social viewpoint, school is to facilitate for socially deprived groups access to education. As a practitioner I am concerned about a statement in attachment no. 1 to the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education on the Curriculum for General Education, which reads 'teachers should

take actions to give equal opportunity for students'[3]. It is hard to eliminate educational failure when there is negligence in community and children living in poverty are faced up to career barriers. The question is: do principals, school counselors, teachers, liaison teachers take thorough actions on behalf of the children? How much can school liquidate or considerably reduce the barriers without the support of educational and local government authorities?

T. Lewowicki says that 'student's failure at school is the school's and teachers' failure as well'[4] and he adds 'the State is relinquishing a lot of commitments and subsidies to the education sector. Local community, parents and teachers are not able to take over all the burden. In consequence, school's setback is a result of the condition of the whole society. But it is children who suffer most'[5].

Realization by school of prescribed functions

While realizing the prescribed functions on behalf of children neglected , school is supposed to find out the child's living conditions and single out the environmental causes of his lack of school progress:

- find out teaching problems and prepare an efficient organization system to teach student individually and to introduce appropriate teaching techniques;
- stimulate and enhance children and youth's experiences at and out school;
- keep contact with local community.

Budget funds on education are significantly being cut, which decreases a number of teachers, school counselors, liaison teachers, therapists and logopaedists at employment. In many cities the principal in charge of a public school is not an experienced teacher, who should be a post-graduate but 'representative' or supporter of a political party. These definitely undermine the image of the Polish state-education system. The other problem is how to change the viewpoint of not only experienced teachers with a long length of work but also parents and make these people work together. How to integrate bodies and agencies from the community? My and other researchers' works reveal that most often than not parents see school as a prime action-maker. In addition, the parents who want to be active partners for teachers and be engaged in school activities send their children to private or non-public schools.

Parents are prime educators and care-providers. In many cases teachers blame parents for teaching and educational trouble made by their children. On the other hand teachers are believed to be responsible for making school progress by students. This does not serve well for a child and does not create positive relations between adults: teachers and parents. What is needed is an open conversation and friendly meeting between both sides, and then joint arrangements and educational actions. This makes either side responsible for a proper course of educational process.

In the community school favoring friendly family relationship, teachers in charge support partnership and a stronger position of a parent in school, not just his presence. Parents should be engaged in working out the strategy of actions and improvement of those already implemented. Thus the parents assume responsibility for child's doing at school, in other words child's excuses, lack of motivation to classwork, days absent, tardy etc.

Mutual work by parents and teachers has an enormous effect on child's doing at school, his progress and motivation to enter further schooling. Economic and social benefits exceed largely the costs of child's failure at school.

A well-working project introduced to many European and American schools is the one managed at a family - educational centre, which is also run by parents. Parents, from socially deprived background, like their children experienced negative classification and damaging labels. Therefore the health, educational and recreation programmes in operation are to develop both parents' and children' skills. The programmes can be linked with child's learning at school and addressed to local community.
In the city of Bialystok a team of educators have been making sessions with the educationally ineffective parents. Their children are signed up for the program Big Brother Big Sister. Being an educational supervisor of that programme, which is commissioned for the area of North-East Poland, I can state that the biggest problem is how to convince and mobilize the parents to attend the session regularly. It is very hard for parents to overcome 'habitual helplessness' and 'damaging labels' and then to activate their individual strength. Despite these, one-year's time of putting the programme into practice by working with a child and his parent(s) is bringing profits with regard to some trainees. Some parents are beginning to act differently at home and cope differently with family problems. Also their children are behaving different at school and among his school mates. At the same time more and more schools are applying for admission to the programme Big Brother Big Sister. This implies that within one year the projected objectives are reached. Such results are brought in thanks to having found out the needs of the local community, having interviewed its members, having recruited experienced educators and having given a good training to volunteers, namely students on how to work with children at risk.

The principle of subsidization

As a result of the transition period reforms underway the Polish family is exposed to a number of threats which affect its internal framework and its relations with the society. Such threats have a number of implications and when they come up they bring evil syndrome. Particularly when they accumulate and emerge they have a grave effect on the family-related education. The latest family -educational strategies are centred on backing up and working with the whole family at its natural environment. Only in the natural environment the process of child's socialization and education is effective. Regular and intensive work with the biological family can be a basic weapon against the social pathology. On the other hand putting focus on the child only does not always produce good and long-lasting results. The vast attention should be paid just to a proper functioning of the whole family, including right relationship among family members and prompting emotional links among all the members, but not to reinforcement and restoring parents' care-providing functions. In very hard cases it is advisable to separate family's pathological effects from the child.

Before taking an action, teachers, educators and social workers should answer the following questions: how can we work with parents or care-providers to meet the child's needs and to develop him right?, what are reasons and objectives of our work with the family?, how should we listen and back the parents?
A timely diagnosis describing the cause and mechanism of the pathological condition, effectively eliminates or remedies irregularities, which may in future turn into serious malfunctions or social inadequacy. The home-training and video interaction training techniques answer to when, how and why there is a

communication disturbance or gap among the members of the family. The chief objective of those techniques is to introduce a positive perspective to the family and teach the parents the fundamentals of right communication with their children. In Poland since 1995 the Foundation for Children at Risk based in Cracow has been managing the two-stage Video Interaction Training within SPIN-Poland project. The sessions are addressed to such professions as teachers, educators, psychologists, care-providers, nurses and doctors. By studying the video record those people teach parents how to stimulate a proper development of the child with psychosomatic disturbances.
However the introduction of those techniques is resisted by practitioners, who are not accustomed to working in the new way. Their fear is centered on how to put in practice the techniques while working with the Polish family at risk. When to intervene or provide assistance just on time? Is a Polish parent ready to make self-criticism, to see his faults when in contact with his children and spouse? Another problem bears moral issues, which is the line of interference to the autonomy and self of the other man.
The same doubts came into light when a Video Interaction Training session was held under Socrates-Erasmus Programme at University of Bialystok[6]. Initially the students were skeptical but as soon as the Dutch teachers elaborated they took interest in studying the training strategy and applying the methods in their future teaching career.

Teachers and parents should be prepared for finding out the child's needs and problems in advance. When attending a special training they can learn how to see through such symptoms as malnutrition, insufficient sleep, bulling, dyslexia and others. The identification of those conditions is followed by seeing specialists in right time and providing professional assistance.

The problems experienced by the socially deprived family are complex. Those are caused not only by family conflicts and educational failure but also by financial and housing problems, which in turns, in many cases, result from unemployment, illiteracy and low social status. For these reasons the family needs specific, complex and comprehensive assistance. First and foremost such a family must be encouraged by indicating its positive family elements, which could be: what they can change, what they want, what are their ideas for overcoming the existing problems. How successful a teacher working with a family at risk can be without improving the family's economic status and without guaranteeing its safety? Does he have the right to teach the mother right communication within the family at the time when she is suffering from job loss or money shortage? Does the concept of better future sound fictitious when the family lacks basic means of livelihood?

Therefore parents, educators and social workers should project together child's learning and take care of his health and development. That is not possible unless professionals and community decision-makers establish a social network to support the family in hardship. When introduced, the strategy will improve a project and will considerably affect individual's or family's self-esteem. A sound family builds a strong network of a safe and supportive neighborhood community. Moreover, a sound family reinforces the social involvement of its members and gives trust to social interactions. As a result people gladly enter voluntary organizations.
The strategy of comprehensive support to be made in advance is a parallel realization of preventive projects and it cracks down juvenile delinquency as well.

In-born inactivity and family's malfunction can be curbed by a very interesting and promising project 'career-ladders for parents' introduced by H. Lawson and K. Briar-Lawson[7]. It is designed for unemployed, illiterate parents and to be realized by family-supportive community schools and social and health service agencies. The parents who enter the project can:

- change their attitude towards school as an institution;
- get involved in school and help a teacher,;
- be awarded a diploma of teacher aide;
- continue their education for career in school, social welfare system, health service or government administration.

The project is addressed to both generations because it meets the parent's needs and prevents future family problems. It also intensifies the work of teachers and social workers.
Not every step of this ladder can be introduced to the Polish schools. Nevertheless one must make an attempt of activating parents, particularly in a socially - neglected community.

Another important issue is minimalization of children's failure at school and comprehensive work with the child and his family in a rural community. T. Pilch says 'the destitute rural community enjoys the lowest grade of education and the highest number of children. It destines to live the life of their
forefathers. Unless the community is inspired by promoting and counseling sessions, the number of such communities will be on increase'[8]. In practice this problem has not been overcome because the locals receive a minimal social welfare, insufficient education for parents and counseling for children. There have not been overall research programmes or theoretical studies on the activation of rural community.

This paper describes difficulties and hopes for building relations between family, public school and local community.
The family-supportive school will succeed if parents, teachers, local authorities are motivated enough and prepared for the introduction of that project, if they understand that the strategy of cooperation and responsibility for education of new generation is a bridge to the future.

Notes

1 Winiarski, M. (2000), *Family – school – local community*. IBE Press, Warsaw, p.249.
2 Okon, W. (1996), *New educational dictionary*, 'Zak' Press, Warsaw, p.190.
3 *Journal of Laws* of 1999, No. 14/129, Attachment 1, Warsaw.
4 Lewowicki, T. (1998), *Failure at School (typical formulations – conditions – positive programmes, pedagogy of success at school)*, in: J. Lyska (Eds.) Failure at School, 'Impuls' Press, Cracow, p 36.
5 Ibid., p. 37.
6 Since 1996 the author of the article has been organising and co-ordinating exchange programs for students at the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Bialystok, Poland, and Fontys Hogescholen SPH, Eindhoven, the Netherlands.
7 Lawson, H. & Briar-Lawson, K. (1997), *Connecting the Dots: Progress Toward the Integration of School Reform, School-Linked Services, Parent Involvement and Community Schools*, Oxford, Ohio.
8 Pilch, T. (1999), *Controversies about school*, 'Zak' Press, Warsaw, p. 140.

Young people's representations of school and family relationships in Belgium

Willy Lahaye, Pierre Nimal & Patricia Couvreur

Introduction

School and family relationships are currently the stake in convergent political and social interests. Studies carried out about school show that parents' involvement in the child's school-life is a deciding factor in the young people's success (Macbeth, 1989; Rochex, 1994; Royer, Saint-Laurent, Bitaubeau and Moisan, 1996). These findings are a strong argument for educational policies which are currently developing a decentralization of the school system management, inviting parents among others to manage in collaboration the school and its projects.

The involvement of parents in the educational system has become a national reality. The O.E.C.D. report (1997) attests to the growing presence of parents in the school. This will is also seen in the recent decree setting the missions of primary and secondary education in the French-speaking Community of Belgium. This decree aims at making local actors directly or indirectly involved in the educational system aware of their responsibilities. Among these actors we find the parents who are currently taking part in the management of the school's pedagogical project.

Parents and teachers are currently undergoing a transformation of their pedagogical role. In this changing context, we wonder how young people view school and family relationships. How do those young people, who are in the middle of academic preoccupations, live school and family relationships? What are, according to them, the final aims of these relationships? Our study shows that young people have very different points of view about these issues.

Indeed, the 'go-betweens' that are pupils between school and family (Montandon and Perrenoud, 1988) give us contrasted opinions about the relationships between both institutions. Studies in educational sociology which analyze the young's point of view on socialization processes they live are rare. However in the present situation, the reading of pupils' representations has taught us several things for the application of a new policy transforming school and family relationships: the young tell us their experiences and their expectations concerning these relationships. The young's different points of view show at a certain extent the way they and their family will anticipate the new policy in school and family relationships. The application of any political project must take into consideration the point of view of the actors it involves. The current study partly meets these requirements.

School and family relationships.

The success in education is in the centre of school and family relationships. We see that the

child allows itself to learn when the family enables him to do so (Cloutier, 1994). The interiorization of the educational project by the child goes through an acknowledgement of this project by his family. That is why the family is considered as a partner for school which cannot be ignored.

Since the seventies, there have been a lot of attempts to involve parents in the educational system (Ravn, 1996; O.E.C.D., 1997). According to J. Epstein (1992), six forms of parental involvement can be distinguished. They range from a weak level of involvement to the ultimate stage that is partnership. Each of these kinds of parental involvement develops its own idea about school and family partnership:

1. The school helps the family in its duties towards the child;
2. An informative relationships links the school to the family. The school assures sufficient conditions for this communication;
3. The family is involved in the school for functional tasks;
4. The parents are involved in home-works. The school helps the family in its supervising role;
5. The parents take part in school management;
6. The educational project is the result of a partnership which involves parents, school, enterprises and the community.

The partnership is a pattern supported by the community of educational research workers (Macbeth, 1989; Bouchard, Talbot, Pelcaht et Boudreault, 1988; Pourtois et Desmet, 1997). The politician also supports this philosophy. Most European countries have wished to begin an educational policy focused on partnership (Bogdanowicz, 1994). However, the evaluation of parental involvement in the European school system shows that it is often reduced to a participation in the management of the school system. In this case, the parents are invited to give their opinion and make decisions about the school project, the calendar, the recruiting of employees, the disciplinary system... The parents are thus not considered as real partners of the educational act. It appears that the only pedagogical formulas focused on school and family partnership are exclusively experimented in some privileged places and for a limited time.

Moreover, research in educational sociology has shown that the relation to school changes with the social background of the families (Montandon, 1994). Parents who develop a collaboration or a partnership with the school are mainly issued from privileged backgrounds and are a minority. On the other hand, a large group of parents prefers to delegate powers or to mandate the school. They come mainly from the working-class and are characterized by a desinvolvement in front of the school stakes. As far as the executive families are concerned, a style of contribution inside the school system is preferred. They are ready to be involved in precise and punctual tasks in the school.

School and family partnership is far from being a reality, but it is still an ideal to reach which is encouraged by many governments making use of a policy bringing together school and family (O.E.C.D., 1997).

This bringing-together has led to the ‘return of the parents’ who had been excluded from school since its creation (Meirieu, 1997). In many respects, the arrival of parents in the school has transformed it in a service to which families apply to get the best conditions for the learning and the success of their child. Such a way of doing has led to a ‘customer drift’ of the pedagogical contract which links families to school: parents develop consumer strategies towards the school which itself reinforces this

consumer attitude by developing marketing of its school paths (Meirieu, 1997).

Today, some writers defend the need to build a new contract between school, family and society (Pourtois, 19997; de Singly, 1997; Meirieu, 1997). This contract would call out to all educational actors as citizens avoiding to particularize the school debate. This calling out to a school citizenship only would enable the reconstruction of a new social and pedagogical contract based on partnership.

However we cannot establish a new educational contract between family, school and society without taking into consideration the point of view of the young because he is the very link between the authorities which govern him and he needs to be given this status (de Singly, 1997).

The young are rarely observed as actors of the educational system (Montandon, 2000). Most of the studies in the fields of family and school speak about the child as the object of the pedagogical act and not as its subject. These studies generally focus on the factors of the family and school background which have an impact on the young.

Still, children are not only passive agents who internalize the socialization process they are undergoing. They are also the active subjects of these processes, they live a single experience which should be taken into consideration. That is why we have asked the young to express their representations of school and family relationships.

Aim of the research

In order to understand the young's point of view about school and family relationships, a population of pupils in their 5th year of secondary school have been interviewed. This investigation was aimed at their expressing their own experience and their ideal conception of school and family relationships.

The types of relationships defended by the young should enable us to see different political profiles given by students about the relations between school and family. With these profiles, a typology of the young could be established. We hoped to be able to characterize the different groups of pupils according to some school and background indications.

Population and methodology

This study was carried out with 201 pupils in their 5th year of secondary school: 77 (38%) in the general education; 57 (28%) in the technical education and 67 (33%) in the professional education (vocational training).

The investigation was led in five schools which are representative of the teaching organized by the French-speaking Community in the province of Hainaut in Belgium. These schools were chosen among a representative group of 35 cities.

The investigation was led thanks to a varied questionnaire. It includes open questions the subject answers as he wishes and closed questions. Thirty questions in total were asked the pupils.

Besides identifying questions about the young and his family, the questionnaire includes a number of interrogations about school and family relationships. In order to understand the way pupils live, view and ideally imagine school and family relationships, four open questions were asked. Here they are:

1. Are there school and family relationships?
2. What do you think of school and family relationships in general, even if they don't exist?

3. If there were school and family relationships, how would you imagine them?
4. According to you, ideally, what would be the best kind of school and family relationships?

Answers to these questions have been analyzed in order to have a limited number of categories for answers. In total, twenty-five categories have been accepted (annex 1).

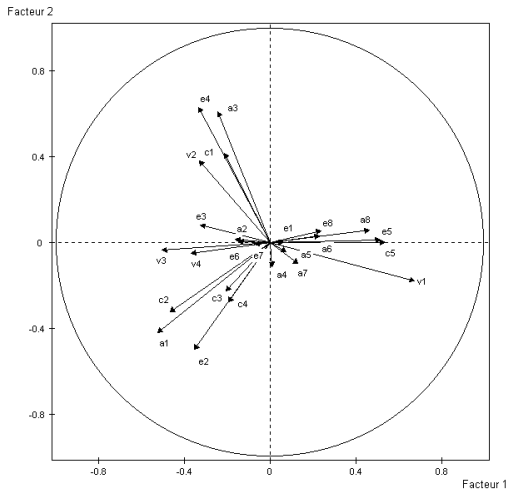
In order to examine the links between answers given by the young to the four questions, the methodology of the analysis in main components has been chosen. The application of this methodology to the obtained information should enable us to bring out the coherence of the answers. We could thus highlight the dynamics of the young's different positions as far as school and family relationships are concerned.

Analysis in main components

The analysis in main components is a variant of the factorial analysis. It is a technique of representation of a multiple information characterizing a group of individuals. This type of analysis can be used without any reference to pre-established hypothesis or particular pattern.

The methodology used enables a graphic representation of the twenty-five possible answers we have studied. This projection can be realized according to several axis. In this case, we keep the two first axis. These axis are factors which allow us to understand how these variables are organized on the graph. Each factor is defined according to the opposition of variables at each end of the axis. A table of the correlation of variables helps to group the variables or to oppose them. Once it is defined, the factor enables to give sense to the different possible groups of variables. The graphic projection takes into consideration the two first factors. Here it is:

Picture 1 - Projection of the variables according to axis 1 and 2



The first factor opposes on the horizontal axis two groups of variables.

On the left side of the axis, we find a political dynamics of the opinions expressed about school and family relationships. Here, the young defend the existence(e2, e3, e4) and the use (a1, a2, a3)of relationships between the school and the family. In the ideal conceptions and formulas they express, the young want to live a transformation of school and family relationships (v2, v3, v4). They wish these relationships were more involving (c1), integrating (c2, c4) and efficient (c3).

On the right side of the axis, we are mainly confronted to opinions which reject a policy of school and family relationships. These relationships are considered either as non-existing (e5, e8), or useless (a6), or even harmful (a7). Family and school are here considered as different environments (v1). In this case, the young do not defend any other conception of school and family relationships (c5).

So, the first factor can be understood as the expression of a political dynamics apolitical versus of the opinions related to school and family relationships.

Moreover, the vertical axis enables the introduction of a supplementary distinction among the variables being studied. The vertical axis that defines the second factor distinguishes on the one hand a group of variables found in the upper part of the graph and, on the other hand, a group of variables found at the bottom of the same graph.

At the top of the vertical axis are opinions which support the active involvement of parents in the school (c1). Here, the young aim at bringing together family and school based on the acknowledgement of the school as place of involvement for the family (e4, v2). This bringing together would enable a better comprehension of the school life by the parents (a3). At the bottom of the vertical axis is a more strategic conception of the school and family relationships (e2). The links that exist between both institutions should aim at a better school life for the student and even at his success (a1, c3). So, the second factor enables us to see two kinds of synergies between school and family. On the one hand, it is an involving synergy which is favorable to the effective bringing together of the school and the family. On the other hand, it is a strategic synergy which the student makes profitable. It is focused on the improving of his school course without forgetting the social interaction and the communication that can be stimulated between the family and the school (c2, c4).

Thus the analysis in main components has allowed a graphic projection of twenty-five variables related to the point of view of pupils on school and family relationships. The two first factors resulting from this analysis have been chosen in order to understand the organization of variables on the orthogonal axis. Indeed, the percentage accrued and that explains the total variance for both factors is not very high (18.95%). However the graphic configuration allows the following understanding: the first factor distinguishes a political versus an apolitical link of the school and family relationships. The second factor discovers the will of some young to develop a synergy between school and family which would be mainly strategic. Here it is important to pay attention to the profits the student could make out of school and family relationships.

The first axis reveals an opposition which has already been underlined in studies on school and family relationships. We find the involvement

attitude opposed to the disinvestment (Montandon, 1994; Epstein, 1992). On the one hand, there is a will of stimulating the bringing together of family and school. On the other hand, the young defend the idea of a strict separation between school and family because both institutions belong to different worlds.
The second axis opposes a conception of involving collaboration to a strategic dimension of school and family relationships. This opposition meets the critics P. Meirieu (1997) addressed to the consumer relationship that links the family to the school system. This type of relationships lead to strategic operations, notably by parents who try to improve the child's results or his learning conditions. At the opposite of the strategic dimension we find a representation of school and family relationships which comes from the philosophy of partnership and from a new pedagogical contract as many authors wanted it to be (Meirieu, 1997; Bouchard, 1998; Pourtois et Desmet, 1997).

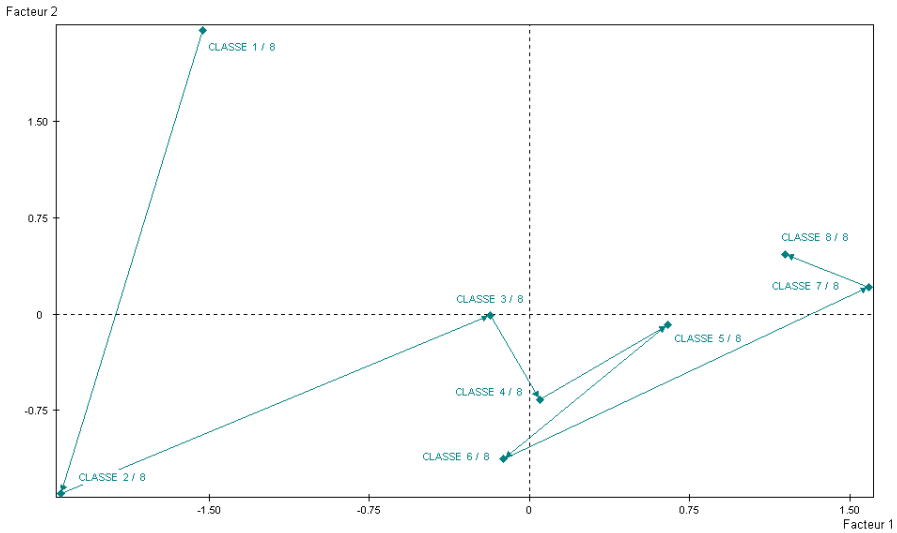
The observations we have just made allow us mainly to see the general trends in the answers given by the students. On the other hand, they provide us a special help for the rest of our analysis.

Indeed, the analysis in main components enables a distribution of individuals in groups taking into consideration the various defined axis. In this case, the factors allow us to explain the groups' position.

Distribution of individuals in groups
On the basis of the information given by the analysis in main components, we have made an optimal distribution of the individuals involved in our study in groups. This distribution is then projected in a graphic way according to the factors given by the analysis. The formed groups can thus be studied taking into account the interpretation of the factors defined during the first step of our analysis.

We present below the distribution of the groups according to the first two factors studied. To make the reading easier, we present on the graph, the balance centre for each group.

Picture 2 - Distribution of individuals in groups



Eight groups are seen on the graph. The statistic analysis gives a series of characteristics for each group, among which the number of pupils, the variables which are determining for the constitution of a group, a hierarchy of test values for each of these variables according to their correlation, either positive or negative. The interpretation of the groups will be made on the basis of these characteristics and of the previous analysis of the factors.

The analysis we make below aims at the explanation of distinct characteristics for each of the eight groups trying to give a synthesis as the ideal weberian type.

Identity of student groups

Group 1: the defenders of a communicative policy.

This first group includes 29 students (14.4% of the population). The young acknowledge the existence of relations between the school and the family. These relations, even if there are not many, allow the integration of the family in the school. For these young people, the school is seen as a place of involvement for the parents. The pupils think that the links between school and family should be used to involve even more families in the school. The relations between both institutions are seen as useful because they open the school environment to the parents. This opening allows the parents to understand their child's school life better.

The same young people are among the most involved: they often give their opinion when questioned about the existence of school and family relationships. Moreover, they are opposed to any conception which defines family and school as two different environments.

Being involved, these young defend a political dynamics of school and family relationships in which both institutions have to develop meeting and bringing closer synergies in order to create a communicative climate of intercomprehension.

Group 2: those in favor of a strategic policy

There are 27 young people in this group (13.4% of the population). As for the first group, the pupils of the second group develop a political conception of school and family relationships. Indeed, they refuse to consider family and school as different environments and they acknowledge the existence and the utility of school and family relationships: these relationships allow the integration of the family inside the school. The conception they defend about school and family relationships focuses on a development and an improvement of the communication between both instances. The young are mainly in favor of a formula which encourages the collaboration between school and family favoring the presence of parents in educational activities, however they remain attached to the classical idea according to which the school helps the family in the education of their child. The young of the second group defend their opinion when they are questioned about school and family relationships: they generally avoid to abstain.

However, compared to those of the first group, these young develop a different policy about school and family relationships. Indeed, they defend a more strategic economy of relationships. For them, if the relationships between school and family exist, they are mainly instrumental and strategic. These relationships are used, among others, to inform and solve problems, they are useful because they are part of a strategy which supports the pupil's success.

Group 3: the separatists.
There are 14 students in the third group (7% of the population). These young are mainly interested in the assertion of their autonomy. Thus, for this group, the pupil only holds his fate in his hands. That is why, according to them, school and family relationships are useless. The separatist desire will go till the denial of the existence of such relationships in the name of the students' independence: school is a matter which concerns the student and not his family.
So group 3 gathers young people who assert their independence from the family and who do not wish to see the family interfering in their school life.

Group 4: the rebels.
We find the smallest number of students in this group. They are 10 (5% of the population). They denounce school and family relationships as the reflection of inequalities born at school: the good student will see good relations between the school and his family; on the other hand, the bad student will see these relationships getting worse. Both institutions are considered as different environments by these pupils. In their ideal conception of school and family relationships, they never imagine the possibility of integrating school and family relationships; the only times for meeting they consider are those which would place school and family in situations of social interaction as during school fairs, meeting days or relaxation days.

Group 5: the outcasts.
There are 25 individuals in this group (12.4 % of the population). We find in this group young people who do not feel involved anymore. According to them, their parents do not care about their child's studies. They claim that there is no such thing as school and family relationships. This kind of relation is considered as useless. We can understand their point of view when we see that these young's parents do not seem involved.

As outcasts, the young also fear to be the victims of school and family relationships. For this reason they wish to avoid this kind of relationships because they can always be a source of problems for the young in front of his family. Thus, these outcasts whose parents do not seem to be involved in their parental role, do not feel involved in the policy of school and family relationships.

Group 6: the pragmatics.
There are 32 students in the sixth group (16% of the population). These young are focused on the concrete and immediate profits they can make from school and family relationships. These relationships are seen as mainly instrumental and strategic. They enable the information and the solving of problems in order to ease the pupil's success.

In many ways, these young are close to those of the second group who also defend a strategic dimension of school and family relationships whose only profit-maker would be the pupil. However something makes each group different. The young of the second group develop a real policy of school and family relationships focused on communication and a better integration of the family in the school. On the contrary, the sixth group remain attached to the pragmatic comfort of the current school and family relationships: they only wish to improve the efficiency of information and problem-solving strategies which are the reason for school and family relationships. These young do not offer any structural transformation of these relations. Contrary to group 2, students of group 6 think that school and family should always be considered as different environments.

Group 7: the nihilists.
There are 43 individuals in this group. That is where we find the highest number of students (21.3% of the population). The main characteristic of the group is to deny the existence or even the possibility of school and family relationships. For these pupils, school and family do not have any relationships because they are different environments. They consider these relations as useless. The gap between school and family seems to be there forever. They do not imagine another possibility for this opposition. This group is thus characterized by the nihilism they express as far as school and family relationships are concerned: these relationships do not exist, they are useless and will never be.

Group 8: the apolitical.
The eighth group includes 21 young (10.5% of the population). They express a totally apolitical attitude: they are characterized by a very strong lack of opinion. Questioned about the experience they have about school and family relationships, what they think about them and how they see the future, these young do not have any opinion. They do not deny the existence of such relationships: they consider that they exist but in a minor way, because school and family, they say, have a mutual mistrust.

Synthesis
The distribution of individuals in groups made on the basis of the analysis in main components has enabled the distinction of eight groups. These different groups show the different attitudes adopted by the young in front of school and family relationships.

The analysis of these eight profiles shows that most young people have an idea about school and family relationships which is opposed to the impulse that most educational policy wish to give them, inside and outside Europe. Most of the groups (the separatists, the rebels, the outcasts, the pragmatics, the nihilists and the apolitical, that is 72.2% of the pupils) are not favorable to, or even opposed to the development of school and family relationships.

The same groups (except for the apolitical) consider either that these relationships do not exist or that both institutions are irreconcilable. For the young, the family does not appear to be accepted as a real educational partner for the school.

Only a few students (group 1 and 2, 27.8%) are for a partnership between both institutions.

The young view school and family relationships as a fight for power with the pupil as a stake. Some young people adopt either strategic attitudes (group 2) or pragmatic strategies (group 6) in front of this fight for power. Others see it as a threat (the separatists, the rebels and the outcasts). These attitudes show that the pupil is far from being considered as an actor in the educational system. He should be the link between both instances which govern him but as de Singly says, ‘ there still is no status for that’ (1997, p.56).

So, through the conceptions they have about of school and family relationships, most of the young show that the family and the pupil are neither considered, nor expected to be real educational partners.

It appears that the way the young sees school and family relationships is related to the number of school failures he has had: the more the failures, the less they wish to support an involving policy of school and family relationships. This kind of policy is mainly supported by students who have never experienced a failure. On the other hand,

the conception of school and family relationships expressed by the young is also related to the job they wish to do. Indeed, pupils who are more attracted by prestigious jobs wish to transform and improve school and family relationships.

On the other hand, the kind of relationships they wish to see is also determined by the social and professional background of the young's family. So, parents who actively take part in the school life of their child stimulate the young to choose a more involving policy of school and family relationships; while parents who are not very much involved in their child's school life lead the young to grow away from any policy which would favor relationships between school and family. The young's professional environment appears to be an important element of his background which influences the way he sees school and family relationships. We notice here that the prestige of the father and grandfathers' job determines the dynamics of school and family relationships the young experience or wish to experience. The more prestigious the job is, the more the young say they are for an involving policy of school and family relationships. The less prestigious the job is, the more they prefer strategic and apolitical relationships between school and family.

These results confirm other researches (Montandon, 1994) which show the relation between the family's social background and its relationships with the school.

Conclusions

On the basis of the pupils' experience and what they wish as far as school and family relationships are concerned, a typology of the student population has been realized. This typology determines the different attitudes students have in front of the dynamics of school and family relationships; it enables the investigation of the way students see their experience and their wishes as far as school and family relationships are concerned. Eight groups of students have been made. We summarize them here after. The first group is made of students who are for a communicative policy of school and family relationships (group 1). Another is also interested in a dynamic policy of these relationships, but in this case, the pupils mainly choose a strategic policy: school and family relationships must first of all help the child's success (group 2). A third group wants to keep its autonomy and wishes to have a distance between school and family because the students do not want their parents to interfere with their school life (group 3). The fourth group is made of rebel students who see school as the centre of an exclusive system and think that school and family relationships are the indication of this exclusion. These young are opposed to the idea of reuniting what is different (group 4). The outcasts of the educational system are in the fifth group. There we find students whose parents do not care about them and who fear the perverted effects of school and family relationships since these relationships could be harmful for the young (group 5). The sixth group is made of pragmatic students who aim at the performance and profit which result from an investment in school and family relationships whose main use is to inform and solve problems (group 6). Students in the seventh group are nihilist. They deny the very existence of school and family relationships; they hope no future change in this field because school and family will always be different environments (group 7). The last group is made of deeply apolitical students. They do not defend any conception of school and family relationships: they do not deny their existence (group 8).

Generally, the point of view the young people have about the different actors of the educational

system shows that students as well as their family are not considered as real educational partner of the school. The educational policy which are today in favor of a dynamic school and family partnership seem to meet no similar wish from the students. They still see school and family relationships as relationships for power in which the student has no place as an actor.

The variables that have enabled us to understand the configuration of the different groups mainly come from information about the young and his family background. School success has an important role in the way young people view school and family relationships. Students who do not have any problem at school encourage the development of school and family relationships. Those who often fail turn their back to these relationships.

On the other hand, parental involvement in the school life also influences the way the young see school and family relationships. The parents' involvement stimulates an active and dynamic representation of these relations in the young; conversely, the lack of involvement lead to a lack of interest of the young for school and family relationships.

The item which seems to influence the most the idea the young have about school and family relationships is undoubtly the social and professional background of the child's family. Indeed, when the student wishes to have a prestigious job and when his family (father, maternal and paternal grandfathers) have. prestigious jobs, the young has a tendency to defend a dynamic policy of school and family relationships focused on the improvement of the communication between both institutions for emancipatory or strategic reasons. On the other hand, students who do not speak about any prestigious jobs and when there is no prestigious profession in his family, the young is opposed to a bringing together of school and family and he wonders what kind of advantage he could get from such a close relationship.

The student's experience as well as his projects for school and family relationships are deeply influenced by his social and family background. The young thus have an idea of school and family relationships which is a reflection of their school successes, of the parents' involvement and of a certain kind of social and professional background of the young's family.
So, any educational policy that wishes to reformulate school and family relationships should take into consideration all the information we have given. The application of such a policy without taking into consideration the social and family background that defines school and family relationships would lead to the exclusion of those that it wishes to include: those who currently live a separation between school and family and who fear a bringing together of these instances will be the first to exclude themselves from a policy applied by decree. Avoiding this exclusion implies a reconsideration and a reconstruction of school and family relationships with the parents, the pupils and the teachers.

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School-parents relationships as seen by the academy. A survey of the views of Italian researches

Stefano Castelli & Luca Vanin

Abstract
About 350 Italian university professors and researchers in the field of Educational Child Psychology, and General Pedagogy, participated in a research into their perception of school-parents partnerships and its impact on educational practices. They were interviewed via e-mail, asking a wide set of questions, among which:

- their definition of the main problems in school-family partnership, differentiating, if necessary, among different age levels;
- a description of the Italian situation, contrasting it with the European scenario;
- the expected positive outcomes of a good partnership between parents and school;
- the main difficulties in creating positive relationships, and suggestions about practical ways of overcoming these difficulties;
- the importance of these themes for what concerns the training of teachers;
- ratings of the relative importance of these themes in their actual research and professional practice, and in the actual research and professional practice of their colleagues.

Data have been treated using different methodologies and software for the analysis of textual materials (among others, NUDIST and TACT[1]).

Results
A preliminary survey of the data at present collected shows a wide range of contrasting positions: although centering round a generic recognition of the importance of school-home relationship, perspectives remain very differentiated. Differences emerge not only on the basis of cultural backgrounds and theoretical orientation, but also depending on diverse kinds of social representations involved.

It was possible to single out a few main categories in the informant's discourse, that can be interpreted as meaningful axis.

Here they are, followed by a few examples of specific utterances:

Abstract (in the Italian language it is sometimes possible to write long sentences without any possible meaning nor sense; nearly untranslatable).

Versus
Concrete ('relevant for a sharing of organizational and managerial tasks in schools')
Concrete views unfortunately tend to correlate highly with:
- a blurred or fragmented vision ('telephone calls ');.
- a tendency to attribute all problems to *others* ('pupils do not transmit information'); parents do not want to be involved';
- a tendency to define all the story in terms of *control* ('we have to control parents, who often tend to invade and overwhelm school').

Business oriented ('it is all a matter of Customer Satisfaction'; 'the problem in general is the same: is the problem of the relationship between every service provider and his clients').

Versus
Tradition oriented (with two sub-categories:
- the cognitive ('it is good to foster specific cognitive and linguistic abilities';
- the motivational and affective ('it can be a risk as well as a resource for the classroom climate'; 'school -family partnership motivates in study').

The Italian Situation is seen as:
Worse than the European Scenario ('our Law is an advanced one, but Italy still stands midway, between a 'custodial' view of school/family relationship and democratic, participative position'; 'our situation is surely miserable').

Versus
Equal to the rest of Europe ('here in Sicily schools are quite aware of the problem'; 'also from Sicily this year we started a master in school psychology in which, obviously, we dedicated a whole unit to this very theme'; from Padua 'the situation in Europe can appear more advanced, but it has often an exceedingly technical bent, and it is less pluralistic').

Note
More sophisticated analysis were possible using some kind of content analysis. Using for instance *NUDIST* (a software package conceived for *Nonnumerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching & Theorizing*).

Focus group survey of parents of children with disabilities who are members of school improvement teams in Florida, U.S.A.

Sally M. Wade

Summary of the study

Eleven (11) focus groups were held throughout Florida, U.S.A. with members of School Improvement Teams or Advisory Councils who are parents of children with disabilities. Thirteen (13) school districts were represented with a total of thirty-three (33) parents participating.

Forty-eight percent (48%) of the participants were members of the School Improvement Team in a school where their child is enrolled in Exceptional Student Education. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the parents were members of a School Improvement Team for an Exceptional Education Center School (non-inclusive).

The parents who participated in the focus groups were almost equally divided with regard to whether they felt like an empowered member of the School Improvement Team. Those who felt that they were an empowered member of the Team (53%) attributed their equal status to either their own personal qualities or the commitment of the leadership of the school to collaboration.

Fifty-one percent (51%) stated that no important decisions had been made by their School Improvement Teams. There was a wide range of decisions made by the School Improvement Teams, ranging from editing of the School Improvement Plan to policy decisions. The participants reported that little emphasis is placed on decisions that effect children with disabilities in the School Improvement Teams.

Those parents who reported that they were empowered members of the School Improvement Team and that the Team had made important decisions were very positive, committed, and enthusiastic about their School Improvement Team.

The leadership of the School Improvement Team and the commitment of the members was the key element identified throughout the survey.

Training and information was seen as an important need of the School Improvement Team members.

The participants expressed a strong commitment to their own children's education and stated their desire for an improved educational system. Their vision for improved schools included: smaller teacher student ratios, more teacher training, increase parental involvement, more technology, and additional funding.

Purpose and objectives of the study

Focus group and written survey items were asked to determine answers to the following questions:

- Are School Improvement Teams dealing with issues related to disabilities?
- Are they an empowered member of the team?
- Are decisions made that directly effect children with disabilities?

Selection of participants

The Office of School Improvement and the Bureau of Education Exceptional Students and Community Support, Florida Department of Education provided a list of potential participants. The Department of Education obtained participant

names by contacting School District School Improvement Contacts, Exceptional Education Directors and the Family Network on Disabilities of Florida. All potential participants were contacted by letter and paid a stipend to participate in the study.

Focus group survey

A guided focus group discussion was held to obtain the perceptions and opinions of the participants on school improvement issues. Participants were interviewed in small groups of individuals (7-15) for 2 to 2 ½ hours. The sessions were audio taped and transcribed to facilitate analysis. The researcher conducted each focus group. A moderator guide of questions was developed for use in the focus groups.

Written survey

A written survey was used in addition to the focus group approach. This helped ensure that the study took complete advantage of the participant's input. The written survey also provided written data for comparison with focus group data. The survey instrument consisted of twenty-four items and was based on a review of the literature, the outline used in the focus groups, and the Blueprint 2000 Survey instruments used by the State of Florida Office of the Auditor General. Respondents were asked to rate their relative agreement with statements on a scale from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4). Respondents were also given the option of marking, I don't know (5). All focus group participants returned the written survey.

Limitations of the study

The study included a small sample of parents who serve on School Improvement Teams. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the participants were members of School Improvement Teams in schools other than where their child who is enrolled in Exceptional Student Education attends. These participants were on the School Improvement Team as either a teacher representative or as the parent of a sibling without a disability. Thirteen school districts were represented in the study. As a result, these findings should be considered exploratory. While the small sample does limit the study, it does identify some consistent themes in the parent's perceptions of School Improvement Teams.

The focus groups sessions were evaluated and summarized in order to identify major category trends and patterns. An index of frequently held opinions about the details of each category was compiled. This method tends to emphasize the majority view and therefore may overlook important information that is evident when the minority opinions are compiled. An important conclusion from an analysis of the minority opinions in this study is that those parents who reported that they were empowered members of the School Improvement Team and that the Team had made important decisions were very positive, committed, and enthusiastic about their School Improvement Team.

Family, school, and community intersections in teacher education and professional development: integrating theoretical and conceptual frameworks

Martha Allexsaht-Snider & Stacy Schwartz

Research conducted periodically in the United States over the last twenty-seven years has documented the failure of most teacher education and professional development programs to address family involvement in schooling (Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Foster & Loven, 1992; Shartrand, Kreider, & Erickson-Warfield, 1994; Williams, 1992; Williams & Chavkin, 1984). State and national groups have attempted to influence preparation in family involvement by setting standards (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1998; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1994; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1994). More recent reports indicate that educators in the United States and Europe have begun to develop programs to support teachers working with families (Allexsaht-Snider, Phitiaka & Martinez, 1996; Corrigan, 1996; Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997). There has been little research, however, on the theoretical and conceptual foundations of these programs. Similarly, we have had few reports of studies analyzing teachers' and teacher education students' efforts to make sense of their learning about family involvement in schooling and to apply their understandings to their work in schools. In the following paper, we examine a theoretically and conceptually grounded approach to teacher education for family involvement used in programs for preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and graduate students in education.

Brofenbrenner's ecological theory (1979) and Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence (1990), as well as her typology of parent involvement, have offered a broad foundation for work in family involvement. These theories have also assisted teacher educators in sketching a portrait of the landscape and arenas in which families, schools and communities interact to support children's learning. In addition to these two foundational theoretical frameworks, we have found three other conceptual frameworks to be particularly helpful in assisting teachers to develop a critical, inquiry-based stance and explore multiple perspectives on their work with families.

Framework

Chavkin and Williams (1993) offer a deceptively simple framework to use in teacher education for family involvement, suggesting the following sequence for investigating a variety of perspectives on family involvement: Personal, Conceptual, Practical, and Contextual. We begin a course or a module of study by asking teachers to explore their *personal* experiences with family involvement, reflecting on the roles their own parents played in their schooling and learning and the expectations the schools set for their parents. An important conceptual framework for both preservice and inservice teachers as they begin their personal exploration of family, school and community links is the concept of the families'

funds of knowledge, drawn from the work of Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992). Teacher education students and teachers first begin by compiling and comparing information about the funds of knowledge developed within their own families and communities (for example, cultural knowledge about fishing and hunting, sewing, car repair, religious beliefs, cooking, or sports). The next step is for them to consider the funds of knowledge developed by their students within their family and community contexts and analyze the ways in which they might be able to make links for children between school learning and family and community funds of knowledge.

After our initial exploration of personal perspectives on family involvement, at the graduate level, teachers are introduced to an ethnographic theoretical (*conceptual*) framework Allexsaht-Snider (1995) constructed in her research with parents and teachers. Aspects of teachers' cultural knowledge, beliefs, and values, and family's cultural knowledge, beliefs and values are outlined in the framework. Family-teacher relationships are portrayed as dynamically constructed, with teachers and parents drawing on unique bodies of cultural knowledge about family-school collaboration as they build relationships with each other centered on the individual concerns of the child. The term cultural knowledge, as used here, refers to the knowledge that teachers and parents socially construct in both formal and informal settings through interactions with each other and with others..

At the graduate level, following the exploration of teachers' cultural knowledge and beliefs, we move to inquiry about parents' construction of cultural knowledge about family-school collaboration (Edwards, Pleasants, & Franklin; 1999). In addition to analyzing research presenting diverse parents' perspectives on their roles in children's schooling (e.g., Boutte, 1992; Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Cook & Fine, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Yao, 1993), teachers design and carry out inquiry projects with families in their own communities. Through both of these avenues, teachers develop understanding of the ways in which different parents draw on their own schooling experiences, their prior collaborations with teachers, their life experiences in diverse community contexts, and their participation in school-wide parent activities to construct their cultural knowledge of family-school collaboration. As they analyze parents' perspectives on their interactions with school related to the different children in the family, teachers begin to recognize the roles that individual children play in the construction of family-teacher relationships. This leads to the understanding of family-child-teacher interactions as being jointly constructed.

At the undergraduate level, teacher education students are given opportunities to construct new cultural knowledge for working with families and communities. Preservice teachers conduct community inquiry projects in which they observe, collect data, ask questions, gather resources, and analyze existing community structures. Students informally interview a variety of community members (including children) to understand the complexities and intricacies of life in the community, understand themselves as members of the community and also recognize the ways in which other community members influence the lives of the students and their families (Bucci & Reitzammer, 1992). As part of their inquiry project, preservice teachers visit local agencies, talk with service professionals, and collect resource information as they construct a resource notebook enabling them to discover the ways in which the community can support teachers and families (Morris, Taylor, & Knight, 1998).

With both preservice and inservice teachers, consideration of conceptual and theoretical frameworks for understanding parent-teacher relationships and the potential for family-school-community collaboration is followed by readings about *practical* strategies for working with families and communities (e.g., McCaleb, 1994;

Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Orman, 1993; Valentine, 1984; Vopat, 1994). At the graduate level, teachers implement strategies in classroom and school settings and then gather data through observation, surveys and interviews for analyzing families' and students' responses to the activities. The opportunity to implement practical strategies and then analyze the implementation from the perspectives of parents, other caregivers, and students leads to discussion of the *contextual* aspects of work with families. Curran's (1989) assertions about re-examining traditional assumptions, Moles' (1993) discussion of the barriers and supports to parent involvement, and Swap's presentation of four models of family involvement are all important conceptual frameworks that teachers draw upon in making sense of family involvement efforts that they have observed.

In order to analyze preservice and inservice teachers' efforts to make sense of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks outlined above, we conducted a study with the following overall research question: How do beginning and experienced teachers apply the personal and conceptual frameworks they have explored in making sense of their learning about family involvement and applying their understandings to their work in schools? Document and narrative analysis were conducted with materials collected over a two-year period from two preservice teacher education courses and two graduate courses. Course syllabi, readings and assignment guidelines, as well as 85 students' reflective writings, action research reports, and family involvement project evaluations were collected and analyzed using ethnographic (Spradley, 1979) and other qualitative analysis techniques.

Working with families

On the first day of class, a group of 25 undergraduate students were asked to define family and share any ideas or questions that they had about working with families. Many preservice students expressed deficit views of families as they compared and contrasted other families to their own family situations. They were concerned with how they would 'connect with students who grow up with unsupportive parents. Is there enough time in the school day to meet these kids' needs?' This student as well as others implied that children would need to be saved or protected from their families if they were to succeed in school. Another of her classmates wondered, 'If a child does not get much family support or encouragement, are there ways to compensate for this in the classroom?' Not only was lack of encouragement a concern for these students, they also wanted to know, 'How will I deal with families who haven't instilled values/morals that I feel are necessary to attend school?' This student continued, 'for this reason, and also lack of parental support, I am very worried about going into the classroom.'

Other students shared their views that parents have something to offer as supports to the school curriculum and agenda, with one student suggesting, 'I hope to involve my student's families in any way possible. I hope I can have families volunteer to assist children with reading, homework, projects, field trips, or to come and eat lunch with children.' A small number of students did not suggest that families or students needed 'fixing;' nor did they limit their perspective to families as serving the needs of schools. Instead, they considered how they might build a reciprocal relationship with families or how they might integrate and meet the different needs of their students' families. One preservice teacher expressed interest in incorporating 'activities in the classroom that are of interest to the children based on their family backgrounds and experiences.'

Student reflections on completion of their first assignment, the community portfolio, showed that some students' views on family and community were changing. Other students were beginning to see broad connections between home and school, and still others were beginning to understand the

complex relationship between knowing students and their communities and their own planning for teaching. One student wrote: 'You can't fully understand your kids in your class unless you find out what their home lives & community lives are like,' and another stated,: 'I do think that I should inquire and explore the community in which my students live. I feel that this kind of activity will help me better adjust my lessons to the needs of my students.'

Students reported that the second family-community oriented assignment, the community resource file, helped them begin to understand family and community experiences that were different from their own. One student was surprised to find many churches serving people without homes in her own town. She shared, 'I always imagined that homeless shelters would be in downtown Atlanta or New York City. I never realized that there were so many people everywhere without basic needs [being met].' Another student reported a similar eye-opening experience: 'Visiting DFACS (Department of Family and Children Services) made me more aware of the problems that my students could face. I was shocked to see a sign that read, 'Attention Homeless Persons: If you use this office as your address, be sure to check your mail at least once a week.' I was not shocked that homeless people could use DFACS as their address, but rather that there are enough homeless people that use this service that such a sign was necessary! Visiting DFACS made me realize what a 'sheltered' environment in which I had been living.'

If we reflect back to the students' beginning ideas about working with families and communities, it is clear that as other teacher educators working with family involvement have found (Bucci & Reitzammer, 1992; Morris, Taylor, & Knight, 1998), preservice teachers can and do change their attitudes and beliefs. Analysis of their writings and projects provided evidence that these teacher education students extended their knowledge about working with families and communities through participation in well-planned inquiry activities grounded in new theoretical and conceptual frameworks for making sense of family-school collaboration. Analysis of an inservice teacher's work in a graduate course provides insight into the ways that teachers might change their practices as a result of explicitly integrating those theoretical and conceptual frameworks into the design and interpretation of inquiry projects with families and communities.

Barbara Beasley was an experienced first grade teacher when she took a graduate course on family and community involvement in schooling. She decided to conduct an inquiry study of her work with a child named Julie in her classroom who was being raised by her grandparents. In her report, Barbara wrote that Julie's grandparents were trying to adopt Julie and her brother, and that the grandmother worked in a nursing home from about 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. most days. Barbara explained that Julie got very excited about books, and, ' A weak area for her is her struggle to learn the words for the week (sent home daily) or spelling words since she had no one helping her do her homework and learn her words for the week. I have learned through my interviews with the student and her custodial grandparent that there are no magazines, newspapers, etc. in the house.' Barbara posed two questions to guide her inquiry project. The first was, 'What can a teacher do to keep the love of books alive in a student who has so little?' and the second was, 'How can a teacher help a family encourage literacy when they do not seem to have time to parent?' From the start of her inquiry project, it became clear to Barbara that Julie's grandmother was not able to come to school and was not comfortable with Barbara coming to the house, so they worked out a system of twice weekly phone appointments. Barbara used these phone conversations both to learn about the grandmother's perspective on Julie's literacy at home, and to share ideas about how her

grandparents might support Julie's literacy learning.

When they discussed writing opportunities for Julie at home, Barbara learned that the grandmother had taken away all of the children's art supplies because they had written all over the walls of the house. Barbara offered to send some materials home and remind Julie that she could only write on the paper. The grandmother thought that would be fine, adding that maybe she had earlier bought the art materials for the children when they were too young for them. Barbara worked with the grandmother to see ordinary daily activities as opportunities to model literacy skills, pointing out that when she paid the bills she could talk to Julie about how important it was to read the information carefully and know what you are paying for. When the grandmother seemed reluctant about listening to Julie read 'One Fish, Two Fish,' Barbara encouraged her to have Julie read to her while she was preparing dinner.

At the close of her project, Barbara reported that she felt that she had learned to develop a collaborative relationship with Julie's grandmother, engaging in two-way communication (as recommended by Swap and discussed in our ethnographic theoretical framework) that guided her suggestions for Julie's literacy development. She stated that, 'I have learned that literacy can be seen in many forms besides just magazines, newspapers and books. I have learned to take into consideration the social experiences and the background of my student as a starting point. As teachers, we have to realize that parents do not always have access to the information that we do.'

Conclusion

The analysis of preservice and inservice teachers' perspectives discussed above illustrates teachers incorporating what they have learned from discussions of theoretical and conceptual frameworks into new ways of thinking about their work with families and communities. Preservice teachers were able to expand their understandings of and respect for families different from their own, as well as to conceive of new ways of collaborating with families and incorporating knowledge of communities in their teaching. The experienced teacher was able to apply the frameworks directly in her own efforts to develop a partnership with her first grade student's guardians to foster the child's literacy development.

Our analysis of these cases leads us to value even more strongly than before the importance of exploring powerful conceptual and theoretical frameworks with both experienced and beginning teachers as a means to expanding their perspectives and practices of family-school involvement. In future research, we need to examine a broader range of theoretical and conceptual frameworks to determine the ways in which they can assist teachers in extending their work with families. In addition, we need to consider the parameters of time and opportunity for in-depth examination of the frameworks in the context of applied projects to determine optimal approaches for teacher education for family involvement and assess whether changes in teachers' practices are being sustained and maintained.

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Families, gender and education: issues of policy and practice

Miriam David

Introduction

In this paper, I will explore the relations between families, gender and education in the context of global social transformations and changes in policies and practices. In particular I want to highlight what has frequently been occluded in the policy debates about families and education and that is how gender is threaded through the issues, linked with social class and race/ethnicity. I want to illustrate how changing policies and practices have different implications for men and women, whether as students, teachers or professionals within education, or as parents in relation to educational institutions. I will refer to changing policy discourses about families and education and the research evidence that has been accumulated which illustrates especially the complexity of changing relations within families and between families and schools. I also want to focus on a particular policy discourse around parents and education, which is that of forms of parent education for future generations within schools. Here there has been a growing emphasis internationally on developing forms of sex or sexuality education together with a new emphasis on relationships but closely linked with the notion of 'family values'. Although these debates relate to evidence about changing family and women's lives the educational and social solutions are restrictive and focus on a narrow concept of 'risk'. More collaborative strategies, similar to those that many women tend to pursue, would enhance family, community and educational involvement.

Global social transformations and changing policy discourses

Over the last twenty years or so, there have been major political and policy shifts in the governance of many western countries. These social transformations have been closely linked with economic and labor market changes and family life changes. They have led to moves to transform the governance of social welfare and education. The traditional and post-war provision of social welfare through public policy, and what had become commonly known as the welfare state, has slowly been reconstructed towards more private provision. A hallmark of these developments has been moves towards marketisation of public services and developments of new forms of public management. In that process there have been changes in the relations between families and public services, education especially, and the reconstruction of participants in such services as 'consumers'. In the moves towards the specification of standards of performance in such public services families have become critical judges as well as users. On the other hand, there have been changing expectations about how families are involved in the provision of education services. It is this complexity and the implications for gender relations that I wish to explore.

These moves have taken place quite globally and instances can be found in many Anglophone countries (such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and USA) as well as in many parts of Europe. In Britain, as an example, educational

policy has been reconstructed through both Conservative and New Labor administrations so that notions of parental choice and involvement have become far more critical to the provision of education. However, what has become particularly important under New Labor in the last five years has been the interweaving of the concept of parental involvement with that of parental choice. Here parental involvement has become a necessity to educational provisions, from early childhood education coupled with childcare, through compulsory schooling and into higher education. The expectation of parental involvement whether at home or at school has become normative; virtually a truism. This is the case not only in Britain but also in other European countries, and in Anglophone countries such as Australia, Canada and the USA.

The centrality of this notion to education broadly defined is to be found in a plethora of British policy documents from the initial 1997 white paper on Educational Standards through to the Education Act, where the notion of home-school agreements was initiated. It has also emerged in subsequent policy documents, such as the National Childcare Strategy, Sure Start, Educational Action Zones and Excellence in Cities. It can also be found in policy expectations and the evidence of involvement in areas traditionally not seen as linking family and education, such as higher education (David, Ball and Reay, 2001, forthcoming).

Changing family lives

However, this critical notion of parental involvement in education has not been interrogated with respect to different families, and the extent to which families have been changing alongside education and social changes. Yet these changes in family life and women's lives especially have been carefully documented and researched by social science academics as well as more polemical and political commentators. A key feature is the changes in women's positions within families, education and the labor market (Arnot, David & Weiner, 1999). These have also been occurring on a global and international scale. There is also international research evidence about the impact of educational opportunities on the diversity of women's lives. (Brown, 1998; Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie, 1998; Tsolidis, 2001; Walkerdine, 1997) There are many complex developments about changes in women's public and private lives and their families such that the changes are about both gender or sexual relations and relations between the generations. In particular, the expansion of educational opportunities has been accompanied by the growth of women's involvement in the labor market and yet not on an equal basis with men. Moreover, these changes have been closely linked to social class and race or ethnicity. There is also an array of evidence about mothers' differential involvement in education and the labor market (Griffith and Smith, 1996). Various reasons have been proffered about mothers' involvement in education and on behalf of their children. (Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Reay, 1998) One issue that has become the subject of controversial political debate has been the growth and preponderance of lone parent families and households, almost exclusively single mothers and often poor (Haskey, 1998).

The public policy discourse of family values

In some countries, USA and Britain especially, the issue of changing families and the growth of lone parent families was initially seen as a problematic issue with respect to social welfare but it has recently become important to educational policy debate also on a global basis. In the USA first but later borrowed by Britain, the moral element of this debate has been encompassed as about 'family values'. Thus, social welfare was reconstructed so that there was an increased expectation that single mothers with dependent children would work rather than be entitled to welfare. Moreover, such policy shifts are now being linked with education, and becoming new subjects or topics within the school curriculum. The debates in Anglophone countries, however, are at odds with those of

many countries of Europe, the Netherlands and Denmark especially, where sexual relations and family planning are normal topics for educational debate (Kelly, 2001). In these latter countries the contradictions between strategies for parental involvement may not be so stark as in Britain and the USA, nor recreate such levels of social and educational inequalities.

The developments have been most dramatic, and clearly spelled out in the USA (Kelly, 2001) In the USA social welfare provisions for poor and single mothers were redefined through the Personal Responsibility and Economic Opportunity Act of 1996. Thus the concept of 'personal responsibility' was introduced into public policy, here with the meaning of mother's responsibility for her children through employment rather than social welfare (Schram, 2000). This also turned social welfare into a temporary rather than more permanent form of social welfare - from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). An educational programme was also linked in with this development, to ensure that future generations of children would learn about 'family values'. The aim was to prevent the creation of more single mother households, teenage pregnancy and parenthood and generally ensure more 'personal responsibility'. States would be entitled to substantial federal funding if their schools taught about 'abstinence-only before marriage'. (Haley, 2001 personal communication)

In Britain, a similar approach has been followed by New Labor's first administration. In this case, teenage pregnancy and parenthood was identified as a major social problem and addressed as part of the government's innovative strategy on social inclusion and exclusion. (SEU, 1999) Thus social inclusion was defined as a public policy to deal with poverty and socially disadvantaged families, through education and other social welfare measures. The public policy solution to the social problem of teenage pregnancy and parenthood has been to develop sex and relationship education as part of a new programme of studies within schools. Thus the government developed national guidance on Sex and Relationship Education and provided additional funding to target local education authorities with high levels of teenage pregnancies. In this case LEAs have been expected to develop educational strategies and courses for young people, women especially, in schools and this has to be within the moral framework of marriage. Again a particular moral stance in which diverse forms of sexuality and relationships may be talked about has not been proposed. However, there is also the development of alternative family, parent and community centres for young people and mothers who have left school.

Parental involvement and family, parent and community centres

Public strategies for parental involvement in education have taken many and diverse forms in recent years. These have ranged from particular and targeted approaches for a diversity of families especially those in poverty such as through family and parent centres, to the parental involvement associated with compulsory schooling. Whilst the expectation of parental involvement in education has become completely normative and a credo, it has not become sufficiently nuanced to take account of the diversity and complexity of different people's lives. Moreover, the phrase remains ungendered whilst there is nevertheless an unspoken assumption that parental involvement is gendered. Thus much of the policy rhetoric surrounding these debates takes as given that it is mothers that take the primary responsibility for their children, especially young children.

However, whilst there is continuing educational research which does not use gender as a variable or concept, most of the research evidence that has been accumulated in tandem with the public policy developments over the last two decades indicates how parental involvement is largely about mothers' involvement in education. Some of this research does not question the problems that this might pose for women's lives or

changing women's lives, whilst other research questions the power relations reinforced and re-invoked in these processes. Edwards and Duncan (1999) pointed powerfully to what they called 'gendered moral rationalities', drawing on their international research on lone parenthood. Here there is also now a question about the relation between women's lives as mothers and as teachers within education. (Sikes, 1996) Much of the research is about mothers of young and dependent children and includes mothers' involvement both at home and at school (David, 1994; West et al, 1999) There is also work on the differences between mothers and fathers and at different stages of the educational process and in different class locations. In a recent study about students choosing universities we have found that there are very different strategies amongst women from men, and that both daughters and mothers tend to collaborate over the processes of choosing. This is in contrast with most male students and the fathers, who tend to pursue traditional and individualistic strategies (David et al, 2001).

However, questioning differences between men and women as young people and their personal responsibilities has not been in a strong theme in the literature on parents and education. Here a stronger focus has been on the problematic lives of mothers, and their maternal strategies (Ribbens-McCarthy, 2000; Weiss, 1999). Another question that is now being raised is about the relations between young motherhood and young children's lives and the contradictory expectations of involvement in education and employment. (David, 2001).

Conclusions

In this paper I hope I have raised a number of questions and challenges about the changing contexts within which the debates are taking place about developing new educational partnerships and collaboration between parents, schools and communities. The policy discourses are setting clear expectations about the resources of time and money that parents are expected to put to the service of education for their children at all levels. They are also framed within a particular moral discourse. Without attention to the particular changes in women's lives and the revised and reconstructed expectations about 'family values' women's lives as mothers will continue to be constrained and constricted, both financially and morally. However, our research evidence has also revealed that women's strategies for involvement in certain educational processes tend to be more collaborative than those of men. This could be an important resource on which to build bridges for the future.

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Partnerships of families, schools and communities in Italy

Laura De Clara

Computers and new technologies are entering our families and schools with greater and greater force.
The world is quickly changing its ways of communicating and if the world changes, then we can not think that our children's world remains unchanged.
Today, children are sunk, at a sensorial level, in a multimedia world, where television, computers, mobile and videogames become more and more their tools to understand the everyday life. Their universe is characterized by a common element: the presence of an all-embracing relationship with the media. The child builds his own identity and his everyday experience integrating various languages. He learns to use new technologies in a different way and he uses them in another way than adults do. Children use these new codes to think and define themselves as individuals. They learn quickly and become immediately more skilful than their parents. Children are growing up in a historic moment which is permeated by multimedia aspects. Their identities are built in this world and are influenced by it.
But as they are bound to these tools, so parents are disconcerted and disoriented. Adults admit that computers can offer great opportunities for the outer world, but they have many doubts and problems about the relationship established between their children and new technologies.
Parents are puzzled. On one hand schools offer and often impose the use of PCs, on the other hand, young people show an excessive attraction towards this instrument. The use of computers is such a widespread phenomenon that it concerns not only the family or the school but the whole community.

Risks
New technologies are very important resources for society, but they bring various risks that must be carefully assessed.
Major fears are due to the dangers connected to the use of The Net, to possible negative effects and to the distorted way (according to adults) of communicating on line.
Another risk is the isolation and the consequent loneliness of the child and the possibility that the frequent use of the new technologies causes a poor development of expressive and manual abilities.
Anxieties are related to the ways of introducing computers in the children's education. It is important to know when, how and how much let them use computers.
Doubts are originated by the question about whether the chats, the use of videogames and The Internet are a valid way to communicate.
Can young people face the challenge of the new communication instrument alone? Can they question themselves about the validity of this source of information? Are they able to use The Net without having an exact destination or goal?
Beside these psychological and psychopathologist risks which are connected to an unsuitable use of the Internet, there are risks of social outcasting and maladjustment to whom non-users are exposed. They can not benefit from the informative and communicative potential which characterizes the telecommunications.

Furthermore, they lose important opportunities for cultural socialization.
From the point of view of community psychology, which brings prevention and promotion of well being and quality of life, we face the need to work on community dynamics as these are likely to produce problems.
The change in technology can consequently be interpreted as a possibility for the community to push a promotion of the individuals and of the citizenship pro active. We must look at the context where organizations and people work together to strengthen the power of the community to meet the needs and solve the problems of its members.
The family has a role of 'filter' and acts as a medium between their children and the experiences of the world they face. Parents are supposed to exercise a function of control over their children. This control must not be an indiscriminate an oppressive one. They have to be like a guide to offer a chance for dialogue. For parents it is important 'to be there', to take part in the experience of the telecommunication world of their children, to talk with them and help them understand the meaning of this experience. To make it possible, parents have to receive and adequate education in order to be able to establish a good relationship with their children. Such education must come from the school. This will be considered as a source of information necessary to handle the relationship children-new technologies in the best way.
The positive effects will then be reflected on the whole community. There is the idea of a 'only one child', supported both in a familiar sphere, both in a scholar and community one.

Educational aspects of the new technologies

With reference to the considerations above, our project is called Med@teca and we are working with the major aim to push the whole community to charge of the educational aspects of the new technologies. This is achieved working on different fronts:

- *With children:* it operates both in schools and outside them in order to offer the instruments necessary to have access to the N.T. in a conscious way.
  This is considered as a sort of 'alphabetization' to the N.T. to understand the language of these new instruments, to be active partners with them.
  One of the most important goals is to provide a safety on the Net. The project is meant to give basic information for a conscious use of The Internet.
  The final target is to encourage a critical attitude of children towards N.T., that are permeating their social and affective lives.
  To achieve this programme, schools and the families work together to emphasize the importance of N.T. for the educational and learning aspects.
- *With schools*: there are actions of education, training and work with and for teachers, to focus on the way teaching and learning is changing, together with the new dynamics in communication and role.
- *With families*: some practical/operative programmes are carried out to examine closely some aspects about:
  - The relationship between N.T and children in learning and growth processes;
  - Educational aspects and risks connected to the excessive use of videogames by children during their spare time;
  - Internet and its dangerous effects: loneliness, dependence, pornography, distorted way of communicating and considering reality, etc.);
  - Positive effects of Internet and N.T.

Practical work

This practical work is based on parents' experiences and it is carried out starting from the idea that the entrance of PCs inside the family, hugely modifies both the communication dynamics both the relationship between generations. This causes great difficulties for parents, that are in trouble when they have to identify their role as guides.

Medi@teca is based on this methodology:
- Practical learning for parents;
- Practical learning for parents and teachers, together;
- Practical learning for parents and children, together;
- Guides, informative booklets and teaching aids to all families.

Putting the child into the centre of the whole community (school, family and other organizations) is an important way to recognize the enormous impact of N.T. on children's lives. This is also a way to acknowledge adults' responsibilities to help children in their growth with N.T. without being manipulated by them.

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Parental involvement in mathematics education in a Canadian elementary school

Freda Rockliffe

This small-scale study, carried out in a Canadian elementary school, explored some of the major influences affecting parental participation in mathematics education and examined the changing nature of the role adopted by parents as their children moved up through the school grades. While parents were less visibly involved in school mathematics as their children got older, in fact a great deal of invisible mathematical activity was taking place at home for children in all grades. The nature, style and strategies adopted by the parents were influenced by factors relating directly to the parents' own mathematical experiences. In contrast to this range of parental responses, teachers tended to view the parents as a homogeneous group, generally lacking confidence and expertise in mathematics. Findings from this study could inform more inclusive school practices for encouraging active participation by parents in mathematics education to the overall benefit of the children.

Introduction

An established body of research examines the relative roles adopted in home school partnerships (Bastiani 1993, Epstein and Dauber 1991). Such partnership initiatives usually arise from within the school, with extensions moving into the home (Merttens 1995). Some researchers have documented the dominance of the school culture and consequent exclusionary practices of this kind of partnership initiative (Brown and Dowling 1993, Macbeth 1995, Merttens 1995). Another body of research examines exclusionary practices relating to gender, race and class (Crozier 1999, Hargreaves 2000, Vincent 1996). Working on the widely held assumption that effective parental involvement not only increases the self-esteem of the parents and children involved (Sutherland 1991) but also improves achievement of the children, it would seem informative to explore the factors that affect this level of parental involvement. The focus of this research was to explore the approaches of parents as educators in their home settings and to discover factors that might influence their practice and their engagement with mathematics arising from a school setting. Consideration was given to the levels of involvement and roles adopted by parents, to factors that influence their teaching approaches, to the teacher's own perspectives and their practices for developing inclusive partnerships.

The Research Context

This study took place in a single grade entry elementary school in a Canadian city. The school population was largely white and middle class. The first language of most families was English though a few families were bi-lingual French-English. A small minority of families were from other ethnic groups with Chinese, Indian, Lebanese and Somali heritage. The ethos of the school would be instantly recognizable as being based on a child-centred pedagogy (LaPierre 1981).

Parental participation was encouraged and recognition was given to the vital role played by parents as first educators. This was achieved

through various mechanisms. A significant proportion of parents were active within the school and occupied in a variety of tasks including fundraising, social events and direct support as classroom volunteers. Each class had a rote of parent volunteers and a considerable proportion of the classes had at least one parent volunteer present on a daily basis. Parents in this setting could be observed helping generally with classroom organization of equipment and accompanying the teacher and children on outings such as those to sporting events. To different degrees, parents were also found working under the direction the teacher supporting specific individuals or groups of children with the classroom curriculum.

Data was drawn from a questionnaire for parents sent to the whole school population and semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers and the school principal. An attachment to the questionnaire invited parents to volunteer for the interview phase of the research. In all, a total of 26 parents volunteered to participate in this part of the study. This was an encouraging response, but beyond the resources of this small study. 11 of these parents were selected by applying additional criteria relating to the number and spread of their children across the school. By this process, the maximum amount of data could be collected by asking individual parents to reflect on their involvement in both, or in some cases all three, of their children's' mathematics education. This parent sample included 3 fathers and 8 mothers. Between them, they had a total of 23 children in the school: 4 in Kindergarten, 11 in the primary phase (grades 1-3) and 8 in the junior phase (grades 4-6). To protect identities, all adults are referred to as female and all children as male.

The parents' sample was, to some extent, self-selecting. The first group to volunteer all turned out to be confident or fairly confident about mathematics and they were already active within the school in other spheres. At a later date, another small group of active parents approached the researcher explaining that they would like to have supported the study but felt that they would be of no use because they saw themselves as being 'hopeless with math'. With encouragement and reassurance they went on to provide valuable insights and contributions to the study.

Analysis of the interviews

The interview schedules were developed in light of responses to the original questionnaire. The purpose of the interviews was to learn more about parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in mathematics education. Interview responses were analyzed under thematic headings developed from the transcripts. For the parents, these themes were:

Parental attitudes towards mathematics
Early influences and experiences of mathematics
Parental perception of their own ability to teach and explain maths
Mathematical activities that parents carry out with children
Variation of activity with age of child
Parental perception of how their children learn
Partnership with school
Degree to which parents engage mathematics in adult life

Similar, but reciprocal themes were developed for analysis of teachers' responses.

Three classroom teachers were interviewed in this study, one from each stage of the Elementary school. They were suggested by the school Principal and chosen because of their success in involving parents to support the curriculum as classroom volunteers. As characterized by (Hulsebosch 1991), they were 'High Involvement Teachers' who were typically able to maximize their interaction and involvement with parents. Interviews were conducted with these three teachers and the school principal in order to gather data relating to the teachers' perception of the factors affecting parental involvement in mathematics education. The research additionally examined how such teachers, already achieving

high levels of general parental involvement, engaged parents in mathematics education.

One interesting feature of this study was the privileged position of the researcher as an insider researcher - being recognized by parents as a fellow parent and acknowledged in a professional capacity by fellow teachers. This offered the opportunity for frank and open responses from both perspectives.

Parents' responses

Analysis of parental responses revealed that parents' perception of their own ability, aptitude and confidence with mathematics had more effect on the level of involvement than did simply a question of age variance of their children or the corresponding increased complexity of the curriculum.

In turn, parents were able to suggest early influences in their own lives that had had an impact on the development of their attitudes towards mathematics. These included the form of engagement with their own parents in mathematical activity that was viewed by some as a positive experience.

'I loved it actually, because I was very involved with my dad at that time; we had a very good time.'

Memories of mathematics at school elicited strong responses. Where successful, these early experiences had formed the basis for a lifelong engagement with mathematics.

'I loved it. I was excellent at it. I was one of the top students in the school.'

For others, memories engendered only negative feelings.

'I was intimidated by it at school so. I tend to encourage the kids not to be intimidated.'

By their responses, parents could be grouped into three types according to their attitude towards mathematics, their own perceived ability and their efficacy as mathematical educators of their children.

Some parents acknowledged that they had maths anxiety and managed to avoid maths in all but the most necessary transactions. Generally, these adults recalled negative early experiences of mathematics. They lacked confidence in their own ability to manipulate numbers and harbored a deep dislike of the subject. This group lacked confidence in their ability to support their children's learning in mathematics. This group were labeled the *Maths Evaders*.

Some of these parents reported that they went to great lengths to avoid mathematics in their adult lives. One, a successful designer, described the lengths to which she would go to avoid precise measuring and calculation.

'I don't write down numbers. I just gauge with my calipers to make sure the sides are equal.'

Commonly, people who have difficulty with the subject claim that they are not naturally mathematicians. One parent described her friend's son as very capable and quick at mathematics.

'a little treat for him is math but for me it's my idea of torture for me it would never be math.'

In sharp contrast to this attitude are those at the opposite end of the spectrum who describe their love of the subject, the confidence with which they manipulate numbers and the pleasure and enjoyment they get from solving a problem. They exhibited confidence in their ability to support their children's mathematical learning. This group were labeled the *Maths Achievers*.

'I still love it! I am completely confident with numbers and calculation and still love a good logical puzzle.'

These parents said that early positive experiences with mathematics probably informed their career choices and reported that they still engaged with mathematics in their professional lives.

'I write for a communications company. I read technical papers. I don't use formulas, but the

way these people talk and the framework we work in is mathematically based.'

The group between these two ends of the spectrum exhibited mixed responses and attitudes. These parents record mixed experiences and early influences on the development of their own attitude to maths. Parents in this group value success in mathematics and consider it to be an important subject. They were moderately confident in using mathematics in adult life and in their ability to support their children's learning in mathematics. This group were labeled the ***Maths Advocates***.

Preferred Adopted Parental Teaching Approaches
The study revealed five adopted teaching approaches that developed from analysis of parental responses. These codified the activities that they carried out with their children. Many of these activities were set in a real life context and parents were creative in exploiting mathematical opportunity.

Basics - Basic numeracy practice of four operations and standard written algorithms.
'When he was little he would sit in restaurants and count sugar packets and pizza slices - simple addition and subtraction ...

Skills - Practice of skills and drills e.g. times tables, telling the time, money values. Sometimes materials to support learning being provided e.g. number charts.
'So I used to tell them, if they have 25c and want to buy a candy for 5c then they should have 20c change and I would show them the coins - the shapes and sizes - say this is a dime, this is a nickel, a quarter. So we start that early on so they know what to do.'

Curriculum - re enforcing the school curriculum at home by supporting homework using teaching method as advocated by the teacher.
'We spent some time and, to give him credit, in the summer between grade 4 and grade 5, he spent an hour a day. He asked me to buy Grade 4 Review Math. Yes, he actually likes it more formal. He's happy with it more formal.'

Enrichment- Extension activities, exploiting the learning potential in a real life context such as DIY/ home improvements, games, sports statistics, shopping or activities in and around the home: cooking, laundry etc.
'I never thought of Monopoly as a math game - adding the dice for the youngest - lots of math and money and rents you have to pay for the older one. For example, a good rent of $50 - well, how many times do you have to collect rent before you get back what you paid for it? - And he'd sit down and figure it out.'

Independent - Teaching new concepts independently of the school curriculum in an opportunistic way e.g. problem solving, engaging in mathematical discussion or mathematical pursuit for the pure enjoyment of it or following the child's interest and enthusiasm.
'He brings questions to me. Like this morning was no big deal - 'Is everything in the world 3-dimensional?' - It's just buzzing around his head - so we spent 5 minutes talking about that.'

Analysis of the interview data revealed an overall trend of decreasing levels of parental involvement, both at home and in school as classroom volunteers, as children moved up through the grades of Elementary school. This is not a new observation. Indeed, anecdotally, both teachers and parents had predicted this general pattern and similar patterns of involvement have been recorded by (Epstein and Dauber 1991, Merttens and Vass 1990). However, explanations as to the factors affecting this level of involvement varied considerably between parents and teachers.

Maths Achievers
Typically these parents adopted a teaching style independent of the school curriculum, making the most of the opportunities that arise in family life

to enhance and enrich their children's understanding and appreciation of mathematics. These parents were not reliant on receiving instructions or directions from school in order to carry out mathematical activities with their children. They were not antagonistic towards helping out with homework or explaining school mathematics curriculum but they rarely taught the basics.

'What I almost never do is ask the children to chant their times-tables or get involved in arithmetical calculations.'

They readily picked up on and responded to their children's interest and questions and could exploit the mathematics offered in many situations. Mathematical activity and discussion was a natural and integral part of their relationship with their children. Very few parents talked as naturally as did this group about the ease with which mathematics was integrated into their interactions with their children. They spoke about it being a natural part of their family life, drawing an analogy with literacy and access to books and stories.

'We have a tendency to exploit the educational value in situations but this may not be the case in every family for example, not just math books but nature, astronomy, plays. It is important that these enrichment opportunities fit into what is already going on at home we don't necessarily sit down and do half an hour or a page of a math text book but they should be extensions of normal family situations.'

Their over-riding wish was to protect this relationship with their children. Some expressed doubt about the formality of approaches adopted in school. These parents were wary that this approach could engender negative attitudes towards mathematics in their children, something they were anxious to avoid.

Maths Advocates

These parents were much more focused on the school curriculum. They demonstrated an awareness of the nature of learning and the development of their children's mathematical understanding at different stages in their education. This understanding was closely linked to their adherence to the school curriculum and their wish to follow the teachers' lead. These parents emphasized the need for a good foundation in the basics and worked consistently with children of all ages to help them achieve this. Parents often taught concepts and skills such as, number recognition and counting to their children in the Early Years of pre-school and Kindergarten. Parents reported that they were anxious for their children to *make the connection* between mathematics learned at school and maths in the real world. They were aware of the benefits of learning mathematics based on experience and were inventive and creative in exploiting the mathematical potential in many real life situations, particularly with their younger children.

'When he was very young, he used to ask me to read license plates. Finally I asked him if he could read them and, lo and behold, he could! He was 2 or 3 years old then. He was interested, it's always been driven by him. We used to spend a whole lot of time it used to take us half an hour to get across a parking lot because we would have to read every license plate on the way.'

Once children moved into the Primary Years, the focus shifted to more complex operations and algorithms. Their parents still emphasized the importance of developing mathematical thinking strategies and stressed the need for a meaningful context whilst, recognizing the futility of rote learning. Although rather contradictorily, this is one area in which they retained a degree of independence in practising skills such as *times tables.* This basic skills practice was viewed as an essential tool rather than the root of mathematical understanding.

Parents were anxious to adopt the correct method by which they usually meant the approach currently employed by the teacher. They were more reluctant to teach concepts independently and more likely to follow the teacher's lead and procedures for fear of causing confusion. They

were likely to seek specific advice from the teacher with regard to suitable activities, methods and approaches to be adopted, especially if their child was experiencing difficulties. As children entered the junior years, this pattern was continued. Parents in this group remained fairly confident about the mathematical content of the curriculum and were willing to reinforce it by playing an active part in supporting homework. However parents tended to loose their autonomy at this stage of their children's education. They became very reliant on following the teacher's lead and suggestions. In some cases, parents who actively sought advice attempted to adopt and mimic the teacher's style. Some parents were so concerned about causing confusion that they became over reliant on teacher advice and tended to avoid teaching new concepts or offering explanations to their children.

'I think parents can also get it wrong there are new and different ways to teach and there may even be counterproductive ways to teach.'

Maths Evaders

The interesting characteristic of this group of parents was that although they expressed a dislike of the subject and in some cases made every attempt to avoid contact with mathematics in their adult life, they were anxious not to transfer this attitude on to their children. Parents in this study indicated that they thought the subject was important and were keen for their children to have more positive experiences than they had had as learners of mathematics. They worked hard to participate in their children's mathematical education. Surprisingly they showed as much awareness of the value of real life activities as the more mathematically confident parents. They often engaged in interesting and creative 'real life ' mathematical activities, particularly with their younger children in the pre school and kindergarten years.

Basic numeracy skills and drills formed the major part of their mathematical activity once their children reached the primary years. These parents felt that it was important that their children had a good grounding in the basics, followed this aspect of the school curriculum closely and felt able to offer support in this element of the curriculum to their primary children. These parents reported that at this stage, they had personally found mathematics uninteresting, but accepted the need to offer support as part of their wider parental responsibilities.

'Just the rudiments - like trying to sort out division. That is something that I do do! And, you know, the big plus and the big minus. I'm the sort of person who would have to check on their work because I'm not big on keeping my attention. I tend to mind-wander because it's boring. I'm good at making sure they check their work.'

Once their children entered the junior grades, these parents reported that they felt ill equipped to support their children in the study of mathematics. The curriculum content became too complex for them to handle with confidence and they were very concerned not to convey their maths anxiety and dislike of the subject to their children.

'They loose me around Grade 5 I mean, they do things so differently that I just confuse them … even their dad, you should see them confuse him, and he's good at math. When they're younger it's OK, but as they get older!'

They tended to steer clear of teaching situations altogether, preferring to pass the baton to another person (another family member or in some cases a tutor). These parents did not relinquish responsibility for their children's learning in mathematics. They reported their concern to ensure that their children were actively engaged in mathematics and completing homework assignments on time. At times parents in this group reported re-learning concepts alongside their older children.

Although the overall level of parental involvement decreases as children move up through the school grades, the pattern of adopted approaches was a complex one, closely reflecting parental attitude, ability and confidence in maths as illustrated in Figure 1

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Figure 1 - Preferred Parental Teaching Approaches/Varying with age of children

	Kindergarten Junior/Senior	*Primary* Grades 1-3	*Junior* Grades 4-6
Maths Achievers			
Basics	*	*	o
Drills	o	*	o
Curriculum	o	*	**
Enrichment	***	***	***
Independent	***	***	***
Maths Advocates			
Basics	**	***	*
Drills	***	***	**
Curriculum	**	***	***
Enrichment	***	**	*
Independent	***	**	*
Maths Evaders			
Basics	*	**	o
Drills	*	***	o
Curriculum	*	**	**
Enrichment	***	*	o
Independent	*	*	o

Key: o Rarely, * Occasionally, ** Often, *** Frequently

In summary, the maths achievers tended to protect their interactions with their children by not engaging to any degree in the school curriculum but continuing to adopt independent and enrichment approaches. The maths advocates developed increasingly conservative approaches to mathematics, conforming to their restricted view of school mathematics and becoming over reliant on direction from the teachers. The maths evaders probably conform most closely to the teachers' perception of parents in general lacking in confidence as co-educators in mathematics.

Teachers' Responses

Teachers in this sample reaffirmed the widely held view (Epstein 1986) that as the mathematics curriculum content becomes more demanding for children in the higher grades, levels of parental involvement tail off. This was attributed not to unwillingness on the part of the parents to offer support to their children but to the demands of the curriculum itself. Teachers perceived that many parents found it difficult to engage with mathematics at this level and to integrate it into family life.

The teachers in this study already had a history of successfully involving parents in the school curriculum. Even for these teachers, parental involvement in mathematics remained problematic and, despite their efforts, exclusionary practices were occurring. Teachers were able to offer suggestions to explain these practices. The Kindergarten teacher observed that, in the Early Years, many parents were able to take advantage of the home setting to provide a learning context.

'At this level, if parents know what we are doing, 90% will be involved. They will use these simple things around the house to talk about all the different areas of math. They do sorting. They do seriation. They just don't call it math.'

This was qualified by the Primary teacher, who illustrated how parents might over-emphasize basic skills and numeracy at the expense of the wider mathematics curriculum.

Teachers generally agreed that the decline in parental involvement could be pinpointed to the children's move from Kindergarten to the Primary grades. Teachers recognized the dominant role that they unwittingly adopted in making increased use of professional terminology around this phase. One teacher talked about seeing parents, year by year, get less comfortable with the curriculum, unaware of the direction it was taking. This teacher acknowledged that the language that teachers use compounded this feeling of alienation from school mathematics.
'Parents, you can see them thinking 'Hey, I'm listening to this; should I be talking that way?' … and they are ready to relinquish some of that right away.'
The same teacher recognized that the calm confidence with which teachers talk about the learning process and aspects of pedagogy could be intimidating, but explains that, from a teacher's point of view, it was subconscious.
'(they) just know something about class management and some have lived with talking about this stuff for so long and I already see that … subtle little intimidation so that leads into math.'

Teachers generally accepted that parental involvement in the mathematics curriculum at grades 5&6 would be minimal. Reasons given included lack of parental confidence and ability to handle the curriculum as discussed elsewhere.
'Some parents, they stay right off it because they are uncertain about it parents are not really sure what to expect and they are afraid of messing it up.'
Additionally, teachers recognized that older children might wish to assert their independence and would not welcome their parents being visible as classroom volunteers at this stage of their education.
'Specifically with a lot of the older children, they emphatically say 'I don't want my parents to come in or to help me with this.' As they get older, it's part of their developing independence.'

Teachers also spoke about parents who are naturally focused on their individual child and who look for specific guidance from the teacher.
'They might want examples and, say - 'give me exact ideas' or 'specifically, what can I do with my kid?''

Teachers in this study were acutely aware that establishing contact with some parents was not all that easy. They cited as examples the low level of interest and responses to proposed curriculum workshops, or the lack of support for activity based homework projects in some older grades. They offered explanations for this lack of involvement that focused, not on any lack of parental willingness, but on lack of time due to the increased complexity of peoples' lives and the pressures of balancing a career and a family. Teachers were aware that this was particularly pertinent for single parents. Economic and social deprivation was also offered as reason for low contact. One teacher, aware of the differential responses to homework activities, expressed concern for the children who did not receive parental support with such assignments. Similar issues were raised by (Brown 1990). One teacher had, for a long time, sent home suggestions of practical activities that could be carried out at home - data collection, investigations etc. These had been issued on a class basis and, for some children, had been positive and rewarding shared experiences. This teacher was concerned for those children who, for one reason or another, had not participated.
'Well, I'm more cautious of doing that now because I would find the varying levels would come in and the disadvantage would go to the disadvantaged. So I've stopped doing that kind of thing because that was unfair - because kids would come back and they hadn't done it and they

were confused as to what was going on. They'd never get those things done.'
This teacher had switched to sending home assignments and suggestions on a more individual basis, which must be less efficient and demanding of teachers' time.

Conclusions
The findings in this small-scale study can only be generalized to the self-selecting parental sample and small representative group of teachers involved. The distribution of the parental sample raises the possibility that other 'hidden groups' might exist. Assuming that in any population there would be a continuum of responses describing attitudes to mathematics and willingness to engage in partnership, then a group of parents would seem to be missing from this sample. This group might fill a gap between the Maths Advocates and the Maths Evaders. One could speculate that this group might be parents who for one some reason felt unable to contribute their voice and experience to the study. The question remains, who are the missing parents and how can they be reached? This dilemma would provide a fruitful source of research in a school with a tradition of active participation.

The teachers in this sample acknowledged that parents played a major role in their children's education and were keen to develop and extend partnership. They had a long history of success in promoting partnership with parents. However, even these teachers acknowledged particular constraints in involving parents in mathematics education. Attempts to do so had recorded limited success even with such active parents as those in the study sample. Teachers also demonstrated awareness that despite their best efforts, some groups of parents remain non-participatory.

This study suggests that teachers and parents have restricted views of each other's practices. Parents have a tendency to take a formal view of the school curriculum and display lack of understanding of its breadth. On the other hand, teachers tend to view parents as a homogeneous group and, in higher grades, see them as mainly not engaged in mathematics education due to lack of confidence with an increasingly complex curriculum.

An analysis of the developmental needs of the parent/child relationships would help provide a model for improvement in the quality of parental involvement. Within the scope of this study, exclusionary practices were occurring in the sense that these needs were not identified or addressed directly by the teachers.

This study highlights the need for teachers and parents to develop a system of auditing in order to establish the flow of information from the home to the school. This would allow both parties in the partnership to address the diversity in mathematical ability and confidence within the population of parents assuming their role as co-educators in mathematics.

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Parents, racism and education: some issues relating to parental involvement by Turkish and Moroccan communities in the Netherlands

Metin Alkan

The complex influence of the home and parental roles and attitudes on school achievement has been extensively researched. Numerous studies and reports have drawn attention to the partnership between home and school and to the need for schools to know more about the home circumstances of children and for parents to know more of what goes on in schools. Yet, it can safely be suggested that the importance of home-school partnership is not very well understood by a considerably large group of parents or indeed schools. While individual teachers or schools realize that it is important to have parental involvement, there is seldom a viable plan for their meaningful participation. Partnership between ethnic minority parents and schools and between ethnic minority communities and school authorities present additional complexities in that it requires schools to be confident in dealing with issues of prejudice, discrimination, and unequal representation. And to make matters more complicated, minority parents often think that, as far as the school success is concerned, the teacher's involvement with their children is more important than their own. Consequently, it is most important that schools and teachers enter into power-sharing relationships with parents, encouraging them to get involved in the education of their children and enabling them to share in decision-making about school programs and policies. For these school-parents relations and partnerships to be genuine and effective, they must be based on mutual honesty, availability of full and accurate facts about children's performance levels and genuine consultation.

Ethic minority parents in the Netherlands, more than Dutch parents of the same socio-economic background, want their children to attain a high level of education. They want their children to have better educational opportunities that they themselves had never had (Hermans, 1995; Ledoux 1996). Yet, the efforts of the Dutch schools to establish contacts with them have not led to an active participation and involvement in the education of their children. And this is not only related to language and cultural barriers. The gap between Dutch schools and minority parents appears to be created by the attitudes and expectations of both parties. Parental participation as perceived by the schools does not encompass the element of empowerment of parents, and the lack of parental participation is taken as an indication of parental disinterest in the education of their children (Van Erp and Veen, 1990; Van der Veen, 2001). Further, some parental desires and normative demands are experienced by the school management and white teaching staff as disturbing, disruptive, and painful (Alkan, 1996).

For a meaningful analysis of these and other issues and problems involved in the relationship between schools and ethnic minority parents, the actual conditions under which ethnic minority children receive their education within the schools need to be considered. One needs to take

into account inequalities involved in the education of minority children, resulting in the acute problem of underachievement among the majority of them. A second point to be considered in this respect is the schooling experiences of minority students. The assumption here is that minority parental attitudes toward schools and teachers are to an important degree shaped by their observations and interpretations of the experiences of their children, relating to the various dimensions of the school as a social system. Over the years, ethnic minority parents have become increasingly familiar with the way in which schools operate. They have been settled in this country long enough to become quite concerned with the schooling experiences of their children. These points will be dealt below. But first, some attention will be given to the approach of schools to the education of minority children and to the ways in which minority underachievement is constructed in research studies.

Implications of ethnic diversity

Over more than a decade, there has been, in the Netherlands, a growing recognition of the implications of ethnic diversity for the schools. In the main, this recognition has resulted in a shift from a concern with curriculum change based on an ethnic additive strategy of innovation (i.e., adding isolated units into the curriculum, which would presumably respond to special learning needs of minority children) to a concern for the responsibility of schools to foster improved academic performance by minority pupils. For the elimination of inequalities involved in the education of minority children, additional facilities have been provided to those schools with high percentage of ethnic minority and Dutch working class children. The aim was to increase the effectiveness and intensity of teaching and learning within the framework of the regular Dutch school curriculum. For the realization of this aim, language teaching provisions were expanded, while programs were developed for the implementation of intercultural education and the intensification of contacts between minority parents and the schools. The claim contained in this approach has been simply that the school could be made an effective institution to counter the effects of ethnic or class backgrounds in a sustained way as to bring about a rate of learning for the disadvantage that is greater than the rate of learning for the advantaged. The results of more than a decade of implementation of this policy have been, however, quite disappointing. Numerous research studies conducted demonstrate that the level of educational achievement of ethnic minority pupils stays far below the level of educational achievement of Dutch pupils (Tesser et al. 1999). A central question that has occupied policy makers, researchers, teachers and parents from the viewpoint of their respective positions has thus become: why linguistically and culturally subordinated students do not, in general, succeed academically. This question has been approached in research studies from a variety of angles. In essence, however, the large majority of research has centered on questions relating to the educability of minority students within the context of the demands and expectations of the Dutch school programs. More specifically, attempts to identify and explain factors contributing to underachievement have often focused on a set of real or supposed individual characteristics, which would be indicative of deficiencies and shortcomings of minority children and their backgrounds. Among the most popular models of explanation of minority underachievement in education has been the socio-economic deprivation, limited proficiency in Dutch language, and ethnic-cultural backgrounds and characteristics of various groups under consideration. Generally speaking, various factors that have been considered within the context of these models have tended to be viewed within a pathological perspective in so far as there has been a tendency to search for what might be wrong, problematic, deficient or deviant about minority children and their backgrounds. Classified in the literature as the ‘social

pathology' model, this perspective assigns disproportionate academic problems among low-status minority students (e.g., cognitive and linguistic deficiencies, low self-esteem, poor motivation) to pathologies or deficits in their socio-cultural characteristics (see Hofman, 1993; Ledoux, 1996; Pels and Veenman, 1996; Teunissen and Matthijssen, 1996).

The focus on the characteristics of learners from minority groups is connected to a particular application of the concept of ethnicity in the formulation of research questions and methodological approaches. Similar to such factors as the parents' educational background or the length of stay in the Netherlands, the so-called 'ethnic-factor' is often treated in research studies as isolable and as functioning independently, rather than in an interactive way. Or, it is viewed as a set of subjective, ascriptive descriptions, shaping the specific personal characteristics of pupils from ethnic minority communities (Isena, 1999). In the literature concerning ethnic relation in education, such limited conceptualization of ethnicity, which shares commonsense and practitioner-based views and assumptions, has been seriously challenged. The deficit view of subordinated students has been classified as being ethnocentric and invalid. Many writers have emphasized the importance of the process of schooling itself and the practices that place minority students at a disadvantage. Alternative models have been offered that shift the explanation of school failure away from the characteristics of individual children, their families and cultures, and toward the schooling process (for a review of these models, see Hofman, 1993). Some scholars have argued, for example, that the reason for the minority underachievement in education may be that schools reproduce the existing asymmetrical power relations among cultural groups, and thus educationally disable minority students (Cummins, 1988; Gibson and Ogbu, 1991; Giroux, 1992, 1995). If they are correct, then educators and researchers must move beyond the question of learner characteristics, differentiation, effectiveness, and erroneous assumptions about the apolitical nature of education, to a critical assessment of learning environments in their political contexts (Fullan, 1991; Gilborn, 1995; McCarthy, 1990; Sarason, 1990). Such an assessment would require the recognition of structural factors such as the distribution and selection mechanisms, and other organizational and conceptual strategies within the school system. The focus would be on the actual patterns of interaction within the context of the school and classroom, with a particular attention given to the ways in which ethnicity informs the educational experiences and outcomes of minority students (Alkan and Kabdan, 1995; Crul, 2000, Leeman, 1994; Saharso, 1992). It would further require the consideration of such issues of political importance as cultural orientations in curriculum content areas, the ethnic composition of the teaching profession, segregation in schools, and participation in and control over educational policy and decision-making in education (Leeman and Phalet, 1998). Among the areas that would gain an increasing significance in the explanation of minority underachievement in education would be: attitudes of teachers; expectations of ethnic minorities among teachers; the relevance of the curriculum to ethnic minorities; assessment and testing procedures; communication between school and parents; racism in the educational system, and racial prejudice and discrimination in society at large. In other words, the research problem would be conceptualized in terms of describing and analyzing the ways in which racism and inequality are produced and reproduced by/in schools and how students and parents experience these processes. *In the Netherlands, research into these and other relevant aspects of the structural characteristics and functioning of the school system has been conspicuously absent.*

To conceptualize the situation of ethnic minority pupils as one of educational inequality is not to rule out individual characteristics and background

as unimportant. Rather, it is to place these in a wider context. In other words, research, which is located within the framework of this model, rejects a single cause approach (e.g., learner characteristics) in explaining group differences and patterns of achievement. According to this contextual interaction explanation, minority failure to achieve in education is understood to be resulting from an unfortunate interaction of many factors. The need to examine relationships between socio-cultural factors (e.g., language, socio-economic status, prejudice, cultural conflict) and societal and school contexts in which they appear is thus becoming increasingly evident. Issues and problems involved in the relationship between schools and ethnic minority parents need to be perceived in this context.

In the Netherlands, qualitative research into the experiences of minority students in education is scarce. And, there are only a couple of studies that look into or give an indication of the nature of interplay between student experiences and parental attitudes towards schools. In other words, research has not paid sufficient attention to the question of how ethnic minority parents observe and interpret the experiences of their children in schools and how this relates to their attitudes towards schools and teachers.

By making use of data reported in four selected qualitative research studies, which are in one way or another related to the above question, an attempt will be made below to examine some aspects of the schooling experiences of Turkish and Moroccan students and the context of minority parental involvement in Turkish and Moroccan communities. The interview data reported and analyzed in these studies relate in the main to factors influencing the school success of the students. Among the items considered are student experiences during the primary school period, school advice received at the end of the primary school, racism and discrimination in schools and society, school-based friendship patterns, relations with teachers, counseling, parental support, and motivational factors. The four selected studies are: (a) Nelissen and Bilgin (1995). In this study, the degree and the ways of parental support in the education of children at secondary level among Turkish and Moroccan families are examined. Twenty Turkish (ten parents and ten students) and fourteen Moroccans (five parents and nine students) were interviewed; (b) Alkan and Kabdan (1995). This study looks into the schooling experiences and perspectives of Turkish students at the secondary school level. In-depth interviews were conducted with 47 Turkish students from four different types of schools. (c) Crul (2000). This study presents an analysis of factors influencing the school success of Turkish and Moroccan students. It is based on in-depth interviews with 86 students aged between 16 and 24 in various levels of secondary and tertiary education. Crul also interviewed thirty parents. (d) Van der Veen (2001). In this study, attention is given to the factors underlying the success of Turkish and Moroccan students at the secondary school level. Part of her data was collected through interviews with 106 students.

What is reported below is a selection of problematic aspects of the interaction between minority students and the various dimensions of the school as a social system. In all four studies that will be considered here, not all students (and parents) share these experiences in the same degree. The emphasis on the problematic experiences is chosen for the purpose of this paper to give an indication of the discriminatory elements in school processes and their influence on student and parental attitudes towards schools and teachers.

Schooling experiences of Turkish and Moroccan students

The process of minority underachievement starts in the initial years of primary education, an experience which many students find it difficult to recover from and as a result they either continue to lag behind or their performance deteriorates even further. In the selected studies,

some attention is given to the experiences of students during their primary school years. The students appear quite positive about their experiences. They indicate that they liked their teachers, got along well with their classmates, and had little or no difficulty with their lessons. Except some initial difficulties mentioned by some students, involved primarily in learning of or functioning with the Dutch language, there was no indication of any important problem relating to their education at that level (see also, Hermans, 1995). Their parents and they themselves were not confronted or informed by their teachers with a learning problem that they would be experiencing. What surprised many of these students (and their parents) was the fact that they came to realize only in the last year of the primary school that they had not learned enough to succeed in tests at a level that they had expected of themselves. The school advice that they received was not in line with their expectations.

The school advice given at the end of the primary school plays a critical role with respect to the position and the level of success of the students at the secondary school level. Many students appear to have been disadvantaged by the low school advice which they received from their primary school teachers. For example, the majority of successful Turkish and Moroccan students have attained their level of education via and indirect route (up to 80 %) (see also Ledoux, 1996). Also, less successful students frequently reported that they were advised by their primary school teachers to attend a lower level of secondary schools. Some students chose to attend a higher school level than that advised; others discovered during secondary school that they had greater ability and worked hard to attain a higher level. Crul and Van der Veen concluded that the secondary school advice received at the end of the primary school was the main reason for the indirect route.

The school advice appears especially problematic from the viewpoint of those students who were placed in a low level secondary school. These students experienced this as an injustice and they were of opinion that they were discriminated against by their primary school teachers. They compared their situation with that of Dutch students, and believed that teachers tended to give a lower advice to students of ethnic minority origin. They perceived this as an act of discrimination, and in some cases, as a source of motivation to succeed and prove their capabilities. In the student accounts, it is possible to see elements of low teacher expectation, comparison with Dutch students, the role of prejudice against the ethnic group, and the problematization of student's language proficiency. Crul and Nelissen & Bilgin report further that parents perceived the low school advice in the same way as these students.

Despite the research evidence indicating problems of underachievement at the primary school level, there seems to be institutional factors at work influencing these processes in a negative way. Taking the student experiences as a basis, the biased assessment and testing procedures and the stereotyped attitudes and low expectations of ethnic minorities among the teachers should be considered among these factors. As the data suggest in all four studies under consideration, there exists a discrepancy between the given school advice and the actual position and achievement level of the majority of the students interviewed. Similarly, a discrepancy exists between student and parental expectations and the given school advice. Crul reports a number of cases in which minority parents believed that teachers' judgment of the capacities of Moroccan and Turkish children were systematically underestimated. The older brothers and sisters of the students, who took the role of the parents in contacting schools, shared the same belief, based on their mistrust in teachers, emanating from their own earlier educational experiences in the schools. They wanted to prevent injustice to be

done to their younger brothers or sisters. In the study of Alkan & Kabdan, the students also expressed their mistrust in teachers' objectivity in deciding upon the school career of minority students. Again based on the disappointments they had from their own experience, they urged that younger generation of Turkish students should always doubt teachers' estimation of their capacity to study further, and that they should always try to get into a higher level of school type at the secondary education than the one teachers would advice.

A particular problem of ethnic relations in education is the ways in which ethno-cultural differences are perceived and acted upon by teachers in their interactions with students. Several studies substantiate the influence of teacher bias and expectancy on student performance. These biases or preconceived judgments may lead to specific teacher behaviors, which create interpersonal barriers for the involvement of these students in learning. Exclusion, stereotyping, fragmentation, imbalance and linguistic bias are processes, indicative of biased teacher behavior that adversely affects the potential success of students.

With respect to their interaction with teachers, the studies of Alkan & Kabdan and Nelissen & Bilgin report that the students spoke of the importance of having a positive and close relation with their teachers. They expected that teachers show respect, understanding, support en encouragement, and equal treatment. In general, the students appeared highly sensitive and extremely perceptive of teacher behavior and attitudes. Besides a friendly and close personal relationship, a certain amount of stress in the form of high expectations serves to improve performance. The students mentioned positive experiences with teachers who related their high expectations to them directly and in an encouraging way.

Crul treats such teacher attitudes, together with the level of student success in a school and the level of appreciation of the school by the parents, as aspects of school climate. The climate in the so called 'black schools' with large numbers of minority children is rather negative, leading to serious conflicts between students and teachers, and parents and teachers. These conflicts resulted mainly from a lack of mutual trust and in a number of cases they had a direct influence on the school performance of children. As sources of conflict, he mentions insensitivity among some teachers towards parental expectations and values, and disagreements over the school advice. Conflicts take place between parents and schools much more often in the so called 'black schools' with high percentage of minority children. Positive relations between parents and schools were observed mainly in those schools where teachers provided special support to the children in their learning problems, parents received regularly information from teachers about the progress of their children, and that parents were involved by the teachers in decisions concerning their children. Similarly, Hofman (1993) found positive effects on the school careers of ethnic minority students where the school had an active policy for contacting parents when contacts with them failed to occur.

Problems involved in ethnic relations in the larger society affect the schools system in a variety of ways. In the large cities where minority populations are concentrated, school segregation has become a serious problem not only at the primary but also at the secondary level. As a result of the combination of discriminatory housing policies and White-flight, the majority of children from ethnic groups receive their education in the 'black schools'. In the studies of Crul and Alkan & Kabdan, the students indicated the negative consequences of this development with respect to the quality of education, school climate, the quality of physical environment of the schools, the discipline in the classroom and contacts with Dutch students. Especially, the lack

of discipline was problematized by the students in schools with a large minority student representation. They spoke of their preference for a school in which the composition of student population is multi-ethnic, the administration and teachers have authority over the students, classroom activities take place in an harmonious and orderly manner, the teachers take their jobs seriously, control homework, and follow student progress.

In the study of Alkan & Kabdan, it is possible to detect teacher attitudes in the experiences of some student, which take the form of an explicitly prejudiced interaction. The students talked about their experiences with prejudiced and discriminatory teachers. As they did so, they referred essentially, as reported also in Crul's study, to a particular teacher and in some cases they used the term 'some teachers'. They also made statements referring to teachers in general. The remarks of the students about the problematic aspects of their interactions with teachers were concerned with open discriminatory acts, prejudice over ethnic groups, differential treatment of minority and majority students, and discriminatory assessment of learning outcomes. Among the negative responses to the students expressed by teachers, within or outside the classroom context, were also an open disapproval of the customs and traditions. Such teacher behavior added to the negative experiences of school of some of these students. In some cases, the students mentioned experiences in which some teachers were even involved in the use of direct forms of racist and ethnicist verbal abuse. These attacks included making negative remarks over religious beliefs and cultural practices, and degrading remarks over the ethnic identity of the students.

Many students who attended schools with a high concentration of ethnic minority students pointed out that they did not experience racism within the school. Those students who mentioned some specific incidents of racism, however, expressed their disappointment in the lack of attention from their teachers and school administration in confronting such acts. In other words, teachers, although aware of the racial harassment experienced by the students, seemed reluctant to formally address to this issue.

In relation to teacher prejudice and discrimination, the students mentioned also that they could see a difference in the way in which teachers behave towards Dutch students and students of ethnic minority origin. According to some students, teachers' differential treatment of minority and majority students results in discriminatory assessment practices. Asked about how they react to teacher prejudice and discrimination, some students said that they confronted the teacher with it. Those students who said that they had not had a direct experience with discrimination by teachers indicated that, in case it would happen, they would relate the matter to the school director. The students thought in general that there was little that could be done about the subtle and indirect forms of teacher discrimination. In taking a stance against teacher discrimination, some students seemed to calculate the formal power that teachers have over themselves.

Independent of the fact whether they have had a direct experience with racist discrimination, the students appeared highly concerned with racism in schools and in the society. They emphasized that schools should take an active role in dealing with these processes. Among the points that they mentioned were a clear school policy on anti-racism, disciplinary measures against racist acts, teaching about racism and discrimination, and clearly stated guidelines for the selection and appointment of teachers.

Reasoning

The interview material reported above illuminates the point that characteristics of ethnic minority student populations are not sufficient to explain or predict academic achievement. School variables

must be taken into account. An important factor that contributes potentially to underachievement and unequal representation of the Turkish students appears to be stereotyped attitudes of teachers that take the form of an explicitly prejudiced interaction with students and low expectations of students' abilities and achievement. Students are extremely perceptive and are capable of understanding the meaning of these attitudes. The students' ethnicity influences their interaction with teachers and their experience of teacher expectations. Stereotyping of minority students appears to play an important part in misassessment and misplacement, as well as other aspects of school experiences of these students. A systematic monitoring and evaluation of school advice given at the end of the primary school period seems to be a necessity.

Taken together, ethnic segregation in schools, underachievement of minority students, and discriminatory school processes provide ethnic minority parents and communities with a ground to evaluate the system negatively and to conclude that schools are not operating to serve their interests. The relevance of all this is that there is a point beyond which minority parents can become alienated and may no longer view efforts on their behalf, however-well intentioned, as legitimate. For a significant part, minority parents' distrust in schools and teachers must be seen in this light.

Dealing with differential achievement patterns requires the elimination of racist discriminations, exclusion and prejudice and a greater appreciation of cultural diversity, both in society and in the schools. Improvement in educational outcomes for ethnic minority students depends significantly on changes in teacher attitudes toward minority students.. Changing the basic attitudinal orientation and knowledge base of teachers is necessary. Teachers should be provided with opportunities to examine their expectations and perceptions of ethnic minority students. School can be more open to the community and to parental influence. For this there are three basic requisites: firstly, a willingness on the part of teachers to recognize the crucial importance of parents to the community in developing multicultural education. Secondly, the development by teachers of the intercommunicative competence and skills to be able to make communication equal and actual; and, thirdly, the identification of an overall program for immediately boosting the level of trust between parents and teachers and ultimately for achieving the goal of equal discourse as a basis for children's education (Lynch, 1986).

The educational policies of the last two decades were based on the assumption that the only legitimate party of interest in the education of ethnic minority students was the educational policy maker. It was his responsibility to decide how the money was to be spent and which programs needed to be implemented to improve the educational opportunities of ethnic minority children. However, there are other parties closest to the teaching front – teachers, students, and parents. There is a need for an increased voice of these major parties of interest in educational decision-making. The assumption for the future must emphasize the consumers of schools – parents and students as well as teachers and administrators. An integral part of this assumption is that the process is as important as the product. The parties of interest must be connected in a search for quality education. Ideas, however sound, cannot be superimposed on others. Doing something *for* or *to* others must be replaced by doing something *with* others.

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Relationships between parents of ethnic minority children, schools and supporting institutions in the local community - some ideas for the future

Frederik Smit, Geert Driessen & Peter Sleegers

Inspired by the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1986) researchers emphasize the cooperation and complementarity of schools and families, and encourage communication and collaboration between these two institutions (Deslandes, 2001). In the Netherlands, schools become convinced that good partnerships between parents and communities are necessary in behalf of the optimization of the students' developmental opportunities, the enhancement of the students' educational careers and the improvement of the teachers' task performance (Smit 1991; Smit, Doesborgh &Van Kessel, 2001). The last few years have shown an increasing tendency for middle class parents to wish to get more involved in their children's experiences during classes and their children's learning at home. Parents from lower classes and from ethnic minorities tend to be less involved in their children's education (Chavkin, 1993; Driessen & Valkenberg, 2000). On the other hand: many parents form higher classes consider schooling to be too important to leave it to professionals only (Klaassen & Smit, 2001) The Dutch authorities have opted for exercising less control and granting greater responsibilities to those directly involved by way of introducing new ways of administrating education systems such as deregulation, decentralization, marketization and parental choice (Van Langen & Dekkers, 2001; Smit, Van Esch & Sleegers, 1998).

In the big city of Rotterdam, more than a half of the pupils are ethnic minorities. Rotterdam seeks to set up a high quality education system for all ethnic minorities, mainly Turks, Surinamese, Moroccans, Antilleans and KapeVerdians. Most of the Turkish and Moroccan parents have little or no education and they have little or no mastery of the Dutch language. Both facts signify a considerable problem if they want to help their children with their homework (Driessen & Jungbluth, 1994). The partnership between these parents and school could be at risk because they hardly get involved in matters concerning school (Pels, 2000). The lack of parental participation is taken as an indication of parental disinterest in the education of their children (Van der Veen, 2001). To this end the city of Rotterdam has developed a policy of community-empowered schools in which the schools' pedagogical task is supported by other activities in the community. The goal of this policy is to improve the collaboration between parents of ethnic minority children and schools and supporting institutions in the local community. This will have implications for the thinking about education and the way schools, families and communities shape the school environment (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996). Townsend, Clarke & Ainscow (1999) suggest the following changes might characterize the move from 'second millennium schools' to 'third millennium schools'

Second Millennium Schools	*Third Millennium Schools*
Schools provide formal education programs which students must attend for a certain minimum amount of time.	People have access to learning 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through a variety of sources, some of which will be schools.
Schools offer a broad range of curricula to prepare students for many varied life situations.	School offer a narrow curriculum focusing on literacy, numeracy, and generic technological and vocational skills.
Teachers are employed to 'know'. The learner fits in with the teacher.	Teachers are employed to match teaching to the needs of the learner.
Schools are communities of learners, where individuals are helped to reach their potential.	Schools as learning communities where everyone (students, teachers, parents, administrators) is both a learner and a teacher, depending on the circumstances.
The information to be learned is graded in a specific way and is learned in a particular order. Everyone gets a similar content, with only limited differentiation based on interest.	Information is accessed according to the learner's capability and interest. The information will vary greatly after basis skills are learned.
Schools are still much the same in form and function as they were when thy were first developed.	Schools as we know them have been dramatically altered in form and function or have been replaced.
Schools have limited or no interactions with those who will employ their students or the people from the community in which the school resides.	Communities will be responsible for the education of both students and adults. Business and industry will be actively involved in school developments.
Schools are successful if they fit their students into a range of possible futures from immediate employment as factory hands and unskilled workers to tertiary education for training a professionals.	Schools will only successful if all students have the skills required to work within, and adapt to, a rapidly, changing employment, social and economic climate.
Formal education institutions are protected from the 'market'.	Formal education institutions are subject to 'market' forces.

(From: Townsend, Clarke & Ainscow, 1999: 361-362)

If schools want to make a positive effort to recognize and validate the culture of the home in order to build better collaborative relationships with parents they have also to pay attention to ethnic and social issues like discrimination and racism, alcohol and drugs, criminality and violence in the (local) community (Braster, 2001). Paramount is, of course, that schools have knowledge of and react adequately to cultural, linguistic and religious differences between the school and home situation.

Incorporating the community at large in matters concerning school in fact offers a horizontal perspective. In addition, a vertical perspective can be discerned, namely lifelong learning. Important principles for the promotion of lifelong learning

through active cooperation between schools, parents of ethnic minority children and supporting institutions in the local community are:

- the recognition that the family has equal importance with the school as a place, where (lifelong) learning can be instituted and protected (Woods, 1993; Macbeth, 1993);
- the acceptance of help, advice and resources from cultural, ethnic and religious organizations in the community that themselves have a strong part to play in promoting life long learning (McGilp, 2001).

According to Goldring & Rallis (1993) and Smylie & Hart (1999), principals and teachers must collaborate with parents and communities to develop and support the mission of the school (Davies, 1999). Culture management which guides behavior in schools (Claus, 1991) and successful policies that support schools in creating partnerships with parents of ethnic minorities and communities school leadership (Smit & Driessen, 2001) results in community-empowered schools in which all members of the community - administrators, teachers, school staff, students, parents, and members of the local community at large - participate in efforts to achieve a school's goals of improving student performance (Burke & Picus, 2001). That means creating two-way communication, enhancing learning at home and at school, providing mutual support and making joint decisions (Swap, 1993; Smit & Van Esch, 1996).

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The relationship between motives for choice and denomination in primary education in a system of choice[1]

Anne Bert Dijkstra & Lex Herweijer

The Dutch system of choice

In the year 2000, around 1.4 million of the 2.4 million children attending school in the Netherlands went to private schools. Of the 7,224 primary schools, 4,148 were private, as were 323 of the secondary 635 schools. These statistics show that the major part of basic education in the Netherlands is private education. Public schools accommodate 32 percent of all pupils in primary education and 26 percent of all pupils in secondary education, which means that 68 percent (primary education) and 74 percent (secondary education) of children attend private schools. More than half these private schools have a religious identity.[2] Publicly funded schools governed by private boards, organized around a religion or other identity therefore constitute by far the largest segment of the schools attended by children of school age (for a description of the Dutch educational system, Dijkstra & Dronkers 2000).

When we look at the parents' choice of a primary school for their child in the Dutch educational system, three important characteristics can be noted. The first concerns the already-mentioned financing of all schools from state funds. This means that a choice for such a school is not hampered by financial barriers, as in many other countries. Another characteristic is that the school choice is usually not limited by geographical or administrative factors, for example the existence of school districts or catchment areas. Although availability obviously depends on the characteristics of the local schools market, the vast majority of parents are able to choose from several schools. Thus, a third important characteristic of the Dutch school system is that most parents have the opportunity to truly exercise their freedom of choice. For example, around three quarters of all parents live within range of primary schools of at least three denominations (Projectgroep Schaalvergroting Basisonderwijs 1990).

Denominational choice in the Netherlands

At the end of the 19th century denominational variety was regarded as an important principle for the organization of the school system. To reflect the religious diversity in society, the Dutch educational system was organized in separate semi-autonomous segments (known as 'pillars') under the auspices of the major denominations. Educational content and school governance were based on the major religious dividing lines in Dutch society - Catholicism, Protestantism, and the non-religious segment - and led to the pillarized educational system that exists until the present day. Schools were seen as instruments for passing on the religious and cultural traditions of the religious group to the next generation. This was clear from the curriculum *(cf.* Gadourek 1956), the motives for school choice, and pupil flows *(cf.* Van Kemenade 1968; Flaman *et al.* 1973).

Since the nineteen-fifties, this traditional religious embedding of the pillarized system has lost much of its relevance due to the process of secularization. In many cases, therefore, religious considerations do not play an important role when parents choose a school for their children *(cf.* Boef-Van der Meulen & Herweijer 1992). In many cases, the religious identity of schools has become highly diluted too, particularly in the Catholic sector *(cf.* Consultatiecommissie Katholiek Onderwijs 1999), but also in Protestant schools.

As secularization and de-pillarization progressed and the pillars lost much of their grip on society, the religious function of the pillarized school system also diminished. However, the pillarized organization of education remained intact, and the distribution of pupils among the various denominations did not change much. Various arguments have been put forward to explain the unchanged appeal of religious schools and the apparent vitality of the pillarized system (Dijkstra, Dronkers & Hofman 1997). These arguments follow various lines of thought. One of these focuses on the effectiveness of the private production of education: private institutions are efficient with respect to both the output of education and the balance of the supply and demand of education (e.g. Dronkers 1995). Other authors have pointed to institutional factors that make the pillarized system somewhat impervious to changes on the demand side (e.g. Boef-Van der Meulen & Herweijer 1992).

Another argument emphasizes the original primary function of pillarized education and regards the content of education as the central issue. The essence of such explanations is that the denominational variety has not disappeared so much as changed in nature (Dronkers, Hofman & Dijkstra 1997). In many cases religious education has transformed into more general forms of religious-philosophical instruction or coaching. Thus, schools have conformed to the altered nature of religion in society: they cannot be much more religious than the groups they serve, or else they lose market share. Moreover, there are still meaningful differences between the religious profiles of the various denominations. The small orthodox sectors and Protestant schools in particular and - although to a lesser extent - schools in the Catholic sector, too, still have distinctive identities (Vreeburg 1993). The student distribution corresponds to this pattern: the religious traditions that families adhere to correspond to a high degree with the denominations of the schools their children attend, even in recent statistics (Dijkstra, Driessen & Veenstra 2001). According to this explanation, the sensitiveness to fundamental and existential questions in private schools contributes to the more or less stable market share of religious schools in an otherwise secularized society. Despite the disappearance of previous 'suppliers' of meaning and a sense of purpose in life, people's need for an examination of existential themes and an embedding of their moral values has not disappeared. It seems that religious schools are better equipped to deal with this need than public schools (Dronkers, Hofman & Dijkstra 1997). Pluralism and religious neutrality sometimes pose complex problems for public schools in this respect, while their rich religious tradition, the availability of rituals and symbols as part of that religion, and their long experience in dealing with existential questions has given religious schools a definite advantage. In a nutshell, this explanation states that the traditional religious variety along ecclesiastical lines that characterized the pillarized system has now been replaced by a system that is primarily an expression of a more diffuse variation in belief systems in which existential issues and the transfer of moral values are still based on various notions of 'the good'. Other explanations, however, assert that the role of denomination in parental choice should not so much be regarded as the expression of a well-founded motivation but rather as a factor that only *seems* to be

significant. Although religion has become irrelevant in most sectors of society, schools are so much alike in other respects that denomination may become a factor in the selection process. According to this explanation, denomination can remain a factor precisely because neither parents nor the school attribute much significance to it (Herweijer 1992).

Research question and data

This contribution will continue along the lines of the third and latter explanation and answer the question to what extent religious or non-religious belief systems are a relevant factor in the segmentation that is still characteristic of the Dutch educational system. To do so, we will compare the preferences of users of primary schools of various denominations, since it is plausible that these preferences will reflect ideational diversity if this is still a relevant factor. After all, if ideational or religious considerations were negligible or even non-existent, a main element of the justification for a system based on ideational variety would disappear.

This contribution will present recent statistics available for the Netherlands concerning the role of belief systems in the educational preferences of parents with children in primary education. One set of data we used originates from a national school choice motives survey held in the autumn of 2000 by the Social and Cultural Planning Office ('SCP data'). Because this survey concerned a cross-section of Dutch primary education, its respondents had children on both private (religious) and public schools. Not long afterwards, in the spring of 2001, the University of Groningen and the Pierson Chair at the Free University of Amsterdam conducted a survey in the religious school sector ('HPL data'). Because this survey concentrated on schools with a religious identity, it also yielded data from a disproportionate number of schools of the small religious school sectors. By combining the two data sets, information can be obtained that is representative of the entire primary education system in the Netherlands while also providing detailed insights into the ideas about education of users of religious education, including the minor denominations of which other studies usually only include small samples. This gives us a useful and robust starting point for investigating the need of users of education for denominational variety in Dutch education in the early twenty-first century. We will approach this issue by addressing the motives that are relevant to parents when selecting a school for their children and the differences between the various denominations in this respect.

The SCP data is based on a national survey among a representative sample of parents with children between ages 4 and 12. The data set contains information about 1220 parents. The HPL data was collected by means of a representative sample of schools stratified on the basis of denomination (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox Protestant *('reformatorisch')*, and Reformed Protestant *('gereformeerd')*). For each school, questionnaires were sent to five randomly selected parents by way of the school. This data set contains information about 475 parents. Unless stated otherwise, our analyses are based on a combination of the two data sets, which represents the national situation because the data has been weighed to reflect the national distribution of schools in terms of denomination. Because parents from ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the SCP data, the data set primarily gives an impression of the traditional variation in belief systems, and for the most part excludes parents of 'new' faiths such as Islam and Hinduism.

Parental considerations

School choice is a complex process that often takes a considerable time. The outcome of this process - the final choice of a particular school - is the result of the interaction between the ideas

and preferences of the parents, the way in which they go about their selection, the information available about schools in the region, the limitations of these schools and the possibilities they offer. Consequently, in many cases there is no one-to-one relationship between the ideas and preferences the parents had before the school selection process, the considerations that ultimately proved decisive, and the characteristics of the school chosen. If the number of schools from which parents can choose is limited, they have a smaller chance of finding a school that suits their ideas and preferences. If these schools do not differ much on important aspects, it is highly likely that less important considerations will ultimately be decisive. A lack of information about the various schools from which they can choose will also make it more difficult to find a school that suits their preferences. Not all parents will be willing to make an effort to collect the necessary information, for example by visiting schools, comparing prospectuses, and so on.

Research conducted by the SCP (Boef-Van der Meulen & Herweijer 1992) on the basis of data collected in 1991 showed that the considerations that ultimately weigh heavily in parental choice are quite often not the same as their initial ideas about schools. Most often, this concerned the denomination of the school. Only a minority of the parents felt it is important for the school to base its work on the same religion or belief system as the family's. Other characteristics involving the quality of the school were regarded as more relevant. In addition, the number of parents that assign much importance to denomination decreased, as surveys of the nineteen-eighties and nineties showed.

Nevertheless, when the school choice was finally made, denomination often appeared to be the decisive factor after all. This probably indicates that the concept of denomination has a wider meaning for many parents than just religious identity. A study conducted by Van Kessel and Kral (1992) indeed showed differences in the parents' ideas about public, Catholic, and Protestant schools. Public schools were associated with 'freedom for the pupils' and an emphasis on the development of creative skills and a critical attitude. Religious schools had an image of paying much attention to moral values and classroom discipline.

To come to terms with the variety of factors involved in parental choice, the literature often groups them in three broad categories: quality of the instruction, accessibility of the school, and denominational characteristics. Research into the role of these considerations often concludes that quality is the main criterion, followed by accessibility and denomination in this or the reverse order (e.g. Pelkmans *et al.* 1993, Versloot 1990). Although it is a useful summing-up of the factors that play a role in parental choice, this 'three-motives model' is nevertheless deficient (for a comment on this model, Van der Wouw 1994). The 'quality' motive, for example, is too broad a concept to obtain an insight into parental considerations. Parents appear to subsume varied characteristics under the heading of 'quality', such as, for example, the pedagogical climate, the available facilities, or the educational output of the school. More generally speaking, the three-motives model does not have sufficient conceptual depth for unraveling the process of school choice conclusively. Its main shortcomings are that it does not take into account the social context of parental choice, the conditions under which the choice is made (the availability of alternatives, the characteristics of the schools, the characteristics of the child, etc.), and the broader set of orientations and predilections that determine the parents' preferences *(cf.* Dijkstra & Witziers 2001). Moreover, many factors are involved in parental choice, which this model clusters into three crude categories that do not provide sufficient insight into the motives governing the selection of a school.

To do justice to the wide variety of motives that may play a role in parental choice, we have used an instrument that includes a large number of motives for school choice. This questionnaire contains 21 items and was developed by the SCP on the basis of insights gained from past research. Some examples of selection criteria are accessibility of the school on foot, a clean and properly maintained school building, much attention being paid to arts subjects, and a location in a safe neighborhood. Parents were asked to indicate how important each of these motives had been when they selected the school their child would eventually attend.

Figure 1 shows the extent to which these items reflect parental preference (only for the parents in the SCP sample). The data indicates that the most of the primary considerations were related to quality. By far the most parents mention the somewhat diffuse concept of 'a good atmosphere' as their main consideration. Other important criteria included good training for secondary school and attention paid to social skills.

The item that refers most directly to denomination ('the school should suit our belief system') is not very important to the majority of parents from this sample. Only two criteria were mentioned even less frequently than this one. Items that - at least empirically speaking - are related to this criterion ('the school should be attended by children from families with a similar background to ours' and 'the school should suit the way in which we raise our children') were not chosen very often either. The percentage of parents who believe that the school should accommodate the belief system of the family is almost the same as the one measured in the early nineteen-nineties (37%). This may indicate that the relevance of the denominational criterion has not declined even more in the nineties.

A somewhat different picture emerged when the parents were asked which three considerations were decisive in their choice for the school that is now attended by their children. To answer this question, parents could choose from the list on which Figure 1 is based. For the top five motives in Figure 1, Table 1 shows the percentage of parents who regarded these motives as 'decisive'. These percentages are based on the combined data (made representative through weighing) of both surveys. Again, 'good atmosphere' is mentioned most frequently. In addition, 'accessible on foot' also appears important, followed by 'religion or belief system' and a 'pedagogical approach appropriate to the child', which were decisive for almost equally large groups.

The decisive motives are present among the parents in various patterns. A factor analysis shows that combinations of the following motives were most often decisive for the choice of a particular school:

- Attributing importance to a similar belief system, a pedagogical approach in keeping with the parents' child rearing style, and the presence of children from families with the same background;
- Not attributing importance to accessibility, children from the same neighborhood, and going to school with friends;
- Attributing importance to after-school care and proper facilities for staying over;
- Attributing importance to social skills and arts subjects;
- Attributing importance to academic achievement and attention paid to learning and behavioral problems, but not to a good atmosphere;
- Not attributing importance to training for secondary education and the availability of up-to-date learning materials.

Figure 1 Motives for school choice

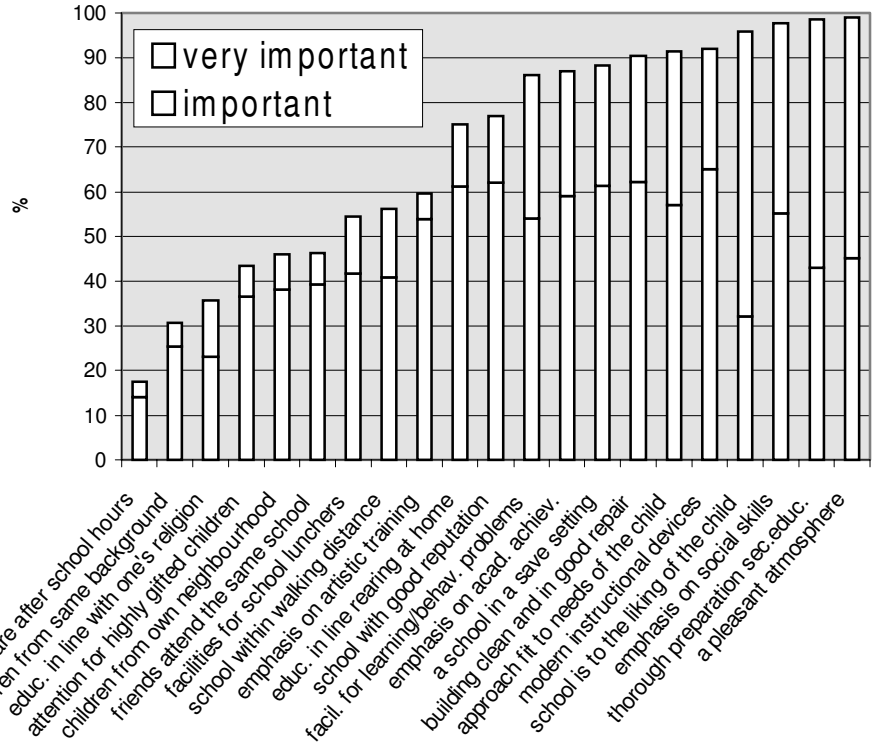

Table 1 - Top five decisive motives for school choice, for total group (N=1701) and by sector of the school (table shows five most important motives for each sector)

	total group	public	Catholic	Protest	Orthodox Prot	Reformed Prot	other priv
listed by top five motives in total group:							
School has good atmosphere	27,0	25,1	27,9	30,2	12,8	24,1	24,1
School is accessible on foot	24,2	26,9	28,1	20,7	5,1	0	20,5
School suits our religion or belief system	18,8	5,4	9,6	36,4	89,7	86,2	10,8
Pedagogical approach appropriate to child	18,5	17,4	17,6	20,9	10,3	10,3	24,1
School with good reputation	16,3	13,0	20,0	19,6	5,1	3,4	8,4
listing of remaining top five motives in sectors:							
School prepares for secondary education	14,1	12,7	15,0	15,2	12,8	13,8	12,0
School attributes importance to social skills	13,4	14,4	12,0	12,1	7,7	10,3	26,5
School suits way in which we raise children 1	1,6	5,1	7,2	14,8	71,8	62,1	18,1
Emphasis on academic achievement	11,1	13,5	10,2	11,2	5,1	0	14,3
Children from same background	3,6	1,1	1,0	4,7	41,0	34,5	2,4

Interesting differences appear when we look at the decisive motives in relation to the denomination of the school the parents selected. One conclusion is that parents with children attending public schools and Catholic schools are very similar. Both groups attribute much importance to accessibility on foot, good atmosphere in the school, and a pedagogical approach that caters to the needs of the child. Catholic parents do not attribute much importance to considerations associated with denomination. This is different for the Protestant sector: both within the large Protestant group as within the small orthodox Protestant groups, similarity in religious beliefs between the school and the home is most often mentioned as the decisive criterion. The two orthodox Protestant parent groups also attribute much importance to similarities between their child rearing style and the school's pedagogical approach and to a school population that reflects their own beliefs. This pattern is consistent with the picture presented by Dijkstra and Veenstra (2000) of the Orthodox Protestant and Reformed Protestant schools as functional and value communities (to a much greater extent than other schools in the Netherlands). Parents from both groups also frequently mention a good atmosphere and the training for secondary education as important criteria. Parents within the large Protestant group attach more importance to the atmosphere at school, pedagogical considerations, and accessibility. Thus, in a sense the motives of parents in the Protestant sector take up the middle ground between the public and Catholic group - where denomination does not play a substantial role - and the orthodox groups where ideational motives are almost completely dominant. The Protestant group selects a school for its denomination, but also pays attention to 'quality' aspects such as atmosphere, pedagogical considerations, and accessibility.

Conclusion

The answer given here to our research question seem to point in the following direction. Although ideational diversity seems to play an important role in the organization of the Dutch school system, and while two-thirds of all schools in primary education have a religious identity, considerations related to religion or other belief systems only play a limited role in the school choice process. Ideational motives are considered important especially in the Protestant sectors. In this respect, the other major religious group (Catholics) does not differ from the group of parents that opt for a public school.

Notes

1 This contribution is based on data collected as part of the study *Motivations for faith-based school* carried out by the Department of Sociology of the University of Groningen and the Hendrik Pierson Leerstoel at the Free University of Amsterdam, and the project *Quality of primary education* of the Social and Cultural Planning Office.

2 These figures (source: CBS Statline) concern schools and students in full-time education on 20 October 2000. Besides religious private schools (57%), the private sector also includes non-denominational primary schools (9%) that do not have a religious identity. Secondary private education in particular includes a relatively high percentage (23%) of non-religious schools besides the schools with a religious identity (51%).

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Strong linkages among involved parents to improve the educational systems and societies of emerging democracies

Iskra Maksimovic & Alvard Harutynyan

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is the overseas relief and development arm of the United States Catholic Conference. Operating in over 80 countries worldwide, CRS mission is to alleviate poverty and suffering caused by natural and man-made disasters and to support the full realization of human potential. The programs of the CRS' Europe Region *Education Network (EdNet)* help ensure that CRS' efforts in the Europe region are viable and self- sustaining in the long term. The EdNet has been active through the Balkans and the Caucasus (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Republic of Macedonia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia - Serbia, Montenegro) since 1994, helping parents, teachers, students and other community members work together to improve local schools and education systems. The EdNet is building an international network of education groups, school technical experts, foundations, research institutions and governments to support these improvement activities and the community-based organizations that manage them.

The educational systems of most of the countries where EdNet operates are experiencing a process of educational reforms that includes the following key points:

- centralization of decision-making and transfer of authority from federal to regional, local and school levels;
- development of intermediate or 'buffer' organizations;
- expanding access to education;
- Denationalizing' systems and creation of non-state private, and/or church school sectors;
- Restructuring of curricula to meet the new demands of the labor market;
- Vertical and horizontal institutional innovation
- Changes in financing (incentive funding and the growing stakeholder participation).

Decentralization

Decentralization is one of the key points of educational reforms in these countries. Most of the counties are experimenting with or contemplating some form of educational decentralization. In some countries process of decentralization started between 1990-1992. In the middle of the 90th, this process was intensified within the new reform changes in some of them, namely Albania, Bulgaria, Armenia and Macedonia. The process has just started in FR Yugoslavia (Montenegro and Serbia). The forming of new democratic institutions, establishment and increase of parliament and local councils, caused, naturally, radical changes of the decision-making mechanisms in education. In the so far process of decentralization, alongside with the differences in the process and achieved results among the countries of Balkan and Caucasus, there is a common characteristic of empowered and developed role of parents both in the formal and private sector. Parents are included in different forms of boards on class, schools, local community and state levels (established parent councils, class councils, school boards,

municipal education bodies, national parent associations). *Parent Councils on class and/or school level* are the bodies that serve to strengthen the links and cooperation between schools and families. They have consultative or advisory roles and varying degrees of involvement depending on the teacher, school and community. *School Boards* are consulting bodies or supreme management organs. They are comprised of teachers, professional workers, the founder of the school, and parents. In some countries principals are not the members of School Boards.

In the context of these processes, the EdNet's Parent-School-Partnerships (PSP) program empowers parents, supporting their right to participate in their children's education and reinforces the idea that by working together they can make a difference in the quality of education their children receive.

Goals

The EdNet's PSP Programs strive to achieve their goals as follows:

- Support establishment of new Parent Councils.
- Provide training for parents, teachers and administrators.- Mobilize community members on common priorities.
- Provide parent association with resources to address priorities.
- Include parents in educational process.
- Develop better parenting initiatives.

Parents included in PSP Programs recognized their future role in process of decentralization as:

- Accountability to and by local government.
- Parent Councils are the voice of parents.
- Sharing responsibility in education.
- Administration and fundraising.
- Ensuring that education meets the needs of children.
- Advocacy to ensure diversity in response to issues.
- Support for the basic needs of the school.
- Increased responsibilities as part the school boards.
- Participation in policy making.
- Understanding educational laws and systems.
- Development of a strong voice in educational reform in an organized way.

Linkages

In the light of decentralization processes in the educational sector of these countries, the EdNet's PSP Programs have identified linkages as a powerful tool for supporting and reinforcing the role of the parents in the local schools and educational systems, as well as a key factor for the success and long-term viability of the EdNet's PSP programming. Linkages can provide the EdNet, parents and other local education stakeholders information, technical support, critical contacts, models for programming and advocacy, and leverage for influencing policy and funding.

The EdNet's PSP Programs have defined linkages as a process of connecting or being connected with individuals and institutions for exchange purposes based on the needs of the partners involved. They belong to the family of relationships, contacts, friendships and networks that are part of the normal life experiences of all individuals. Linkages can vary from very formal and strategic to informal and casual. Formal linkages can be impersonal, unemotional and underpinned by a contact or memorandum of understanding. Informal linkages tend to be emotional, based on respect, trust and loyalty, and underpinned by moral obligation. The EdNet believes that it is individuals, not organizations, who make contacts and establish relationships that can result in strategic linkages to meet specific programming needs. However, they entail understanding and commitment between the partners, mutual learning, strategic planning and interactions between partners, strategic management and sustaining relationships.

Types of linkages

The types of linkages that the EdNet seeks include:

- *Anchor partners* - Organizations specializing in parental involvement in education, peace-building and civic education, community

mobilization and development, advocacy, and other areas of Net importance. These should e community-based, constituency-driven organizations that can commit to long-term engagement.

- *Key contacts* - Individuals who bring relevant skills and knowledge are particularly committed to community involvement in education, quality education for children, and CRS' strategy.
- *School systems* - Relationships with school systems that have the capacity, interest and will to engage their students in on-going communication and learning with students of the PSP region.
- *Universities, Research institutes and consulting firms*- Specialized institutions that can provide information, research support, and technical assistance, as well as be a source of long-term support.
- *Donors and foundations* - Traditional and non-traditional donors that are committed to education and other aspects of the strategy such as peace building, child policy, etc.
- *Governments and public institutions* - European and US government bodies (ministries, departments of education, pedagogical institutes, others) that are willing to influence positive change in country enabling environments.
- *The private sector* - Socially responsible corporations, especially those that operate in the PSP region and within Diaspora communities, that are contributing to stability in the region and improving opportunities to children.

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